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SOME REFLECTIONS ON SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS*

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As World War II drew to a close, the leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition—Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill—sembled at Yalta to ponder the future. Already, sharp clashes at the conference table over the future fate of Poland and Eastern Europe cast a sombre spell over the proceedings. But the necessities of the alliance still served to suppress differences and to emphasize a search for consensus. At a tripartite dinner meeting on 8 February 1945, President Roosevelt, ever hopeful, described the relations of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States “as that of a family” and spoke of a future in which their common objectives would be “to give to every man, woman, and child on this earth the possibility of security and well-being.”¹ Marshal Stalin, perhaps more realistic, “remarked that it was not so difficult to keep unity in time of war since there was a joint aim to defeat the common enemy which was clear to everyone. . . . the difficult task came after the war when diverse interests tended to divide the allies.”² Nevertheless, he expressed himself as “confident that the present alliance would meet this test also and that it was our duty to see that it would, and that our relations in peacetime should be as strong as they had been in war.” Prime Minister Churchill somewhat grandiloquently spoke of “standing on the crest of a hill with the glories of future possibilities stretching before us. He said that in the modern world the function of leadership was to lead the people out from the forests into the broad sunlit plains of peace and happiness. He felt this prize was

nearer our grasp than any time before in history and it would be a tragedy for which history would never forgive us if we let this prize slip from our grasp through inertia or carelessness.”³

In retrospect, it is almost too easy to dismiss the pronouncements of Roosevelt as naïve, the declarations of Stalin as misleading, and the effusions of Churchill as meaningless banquet oratory. Yet, harsh as history’s judgment may turn out to be on the aftermath of Yalta, there remains a sense of a great opportunity tragically lost, of statesmen not unaware of their responsibilities, but denied the possibilities of fulfilling them because of the very different visions of national interest and world order which guided their thoughts and actions.

On the American side two sharply contrasting views of post-war relations with the Soviet Union emerged as the time approached for peace-making. The more sanguine school envisaged no insuperable barriers to a satisfactory post-war relationship with the Soviet Union. Indeed, it assumed that American willingness to recognize Soviet security interests in Eastern Europe and to provide aid in Soviet post-war reconstruction would disarm Soviet suspicions, change the attitudes of its leaders toward collaboration with the West, and build the basis of a permanent peace. On the other hand, those who prided themselves on their realism saw the expansion of Soviet power in the post-war world as a force which had to be checked and restrained.⁴ Persuaded, as George Kennan

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 798–799.

⁴ Whatever may have been Stalin’s long range goals, his actions in the closing days of the war and the immediate post-war period clearly revealed that he was determined to assume a dominant position in Eastern Europe and to regain the Far Eastern Tsarist territories lost in the Russo-Japanese War. But his claims were even

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¹ U. S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, 1955) p. 798.

² *Ibid.*

was later to put it, that the Kremlin's "main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power," the conclusion followed that "the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long

more far-reaching. They included a demand for a military base on the Turkish Straits which would enable the Soviet Union to control access to the Black Sea, trusteeship of one of the former Italian North African colonies which would establish the Soviet Union as a Mediterranean power, participation in control of the Ruhr as well as unilateral control of the East Zone of Germany, and an insistence on prolonging Soviet occupation of Iranian territory. It could be, and indeed was, argued that none of these actions directly affected American interests. But, as Harriman put it in a wartime dispatch (September 20, 1944) to the Secretary of State, "What frightens me however is that when a country begins to extend its influence by strong arm methods beyond its borders under the guise of security it is difficult to see how a line can be drawn. If the policy is accepted that the Soviet Union has a right to penetrate her immediate neighbors for security, penetration of the next immediate neighbors becomes at a certain time equally logical." It was out of the fear of further penetration that the policy of containment was born.

In theory, at least, Stalin might have pursued an alternative course which would have eased the task of post-war collaboration with his wartime allies. Had he limited his expansionist claims and permitted regimes based on local preferences to emerge in Eastern Europe, the way might have been opened for a large American post-war reconstruction loan to aid in the rebuilding of the Soviet economy. Yet to state an option in this form is to fail to come to grips with Stalin's commitments and calculations. Deeply suspicious of his capitalist partners, he could not even conceive of entrusting his future security to their goodwill or good nature. As his Politburo associate, Mikhael Kalinin put it in an August 1945 address to a conference of party propagandists: "Even now after the greatest victory known to history we cannot for one minute forget the basic fact that our country remains the one socialist state in the world . . . The victory achieved does not mean that all dangers to our state structure and social order have disappeared. Only the more concrete, most immediate danger, which threatened us from Hitlerite Germany, has disappeared. In order that the danger of war may really disappear for a long time, it is necessary to consolidate our victory."

To consolidate the victory meant installing

term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."⁵ This doctrine of containment, which was to be adopted as the basis of American policy toward the Soviet Union in the post-war period, clearly meant that the United States would "regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner, in the political arena."⁶ While the existence of this rivalry did not exclude an uneasy coexis-

"friendly" regimes wherever the writ of Soviet power ran, and in the last analysis the only "friendly" regimes that could be fully trusted were Communist-dominated ones. As Stalin stated in an unusual moment of frankness, "A freely elected government in any of these countries would be anti-Soviet, and that we cannot allow." Assured by Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference that there would be no American troops left in Europe two years after the war, he counted on the dissipation of American military forces to open up new opportunities for the Soviet Union as the dominant continental military power. At the same time he did not overestimate his strength and sought to avoid direct challenges which maximized the risk of war. Urged by Tito to help drive the Anglo-Americans out of Trieste, he gave the Yugoslavs diplomatic support, but stopped short of military action. In a revealing exchange with the Yugoslavs, he declared: "Since all other methods were exhausted, the Soviet Union had only one other method left for gaining Trieste for Yugoslavia—to start war with the Anglo-Americans over Trieste and take it by force. The Yugoslav comrades could not fail to realize that after such a hard war the USSR could not enter another." Nor did Stalin at first believe that the policies which he was espousing necessarily meant that he would have to forego Western aid in Soviet post-war reconstruction. Convinced that the United States faced the prospect of large-scale unemployment and a major economic crisis at the end of the war, he apparently calculated that the Americans would be driven to extend sizable credits on favorable terms by their need to find outlets for their exports. In this, as in other appraisals of American reactions, Stalin turned out to be mistaken. The result was to force him back on his own resources, to lead him to exploit to the utmost such war booty and reparations as were available to him and to launch a new industrialization drive at home with its attendant sacrifice of living standards to guarantee the "homeland . . . against all possible accidents."

⁵ George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," reprinted in A Foreign Affairs Reader, Philip E. Mosely, (ed.), *The Soviet Union 1922-1962*, (New York, Praeger, 1963), pp. 177-178.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

tence of the two systems, its effect was necessarily to increase the strains of the Soviet-American relationship and to open up the prospect of a series of dangerous confrontations wherever Soviet and American interests impinged or collided.

From the beginning, the doctrine of containment had its critics. Voices on the right denounced it for its passivity and lack of aggressiveness. They argued that containment was essentially a negative and static policy, that it left the initiative with the Soviet Union, and that the main object of American policy ought to be to roll back the Soviet advance and liberate areas captured by the Communists. Perhaps the most articulate spokesman for this point of view was John Foster Dulles, though once ensconced in power as Secretary of State he did more than any one else to demonstrate that it was empty rhetoric. Put to the test of responding to the East German rising of 1953, the Hungarian revolution of 1956, and repeated calls to unleash Chiang-Kai-Shek, he proved it was easier to condemn containment than to abandon it.

On the other hand, there were some like Walter Lippmann who criticized the doctrine of containment from a different vantage point. Writing in 1947, Lippmann saw containment as implying "unending intervention in all the countries that are supposed to contain the Soviet Union"⁷ and feared that it would involve the United States in commitments which would strain its resources to the breaking point. Lippmann refused to accept the then prevalent view that the Soviet Union was bent on world domination. Arguing that Soviet objectives were limited and amenable to compromise, Lippmann called for an effort to ease the tensions of the Cold War by neutralizing Germany and withdrawing Soviet and Western forces from Central Europe. George Kennan, the father of the doctrine of containment, shared many of Lippmann's misgivings about the way in which containment was being interpreted by American officialdom.⁸ Because he believed that American policy makers were over-emphasizing the military threat from the Soviet Union, Kennan regarded military assistance to nations such as Turkey, which bordered on the Soviet Union, as unduly provocative. Because he believed that American for-

ign policy should only be concerned with areas vital to American security, he also objected to open-ended commitments to oppose Communism anywhere and everywhere. Nor, in Kennan's view, did containment exclude efforts to lessen tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the post-Stalinist period Kennan became an ardent advocate of Lippmann's proposals for the neutralization of Germany and disengagement in Central Europe.

As post-war relations between the Soviet Union and the United States deteriorated, the warnings and pleas of the Lippmanns and Kennans went unheeded. The lessons of the first Berlin crisis and the Korean War were read as dictating a policy of building American positions of military strength wherever a threat of Communist aggression presented itself. The results were predictable. A stalemate of sorts was achieved. But meanwhile both sides embarked on a desperate arms race. Both sides sought to strengthen and solidify their own systems of alliances while probing for weaknesses in the camps of their antagonists. Both sides sought to exploit the power vacuum created by decolonization to carve out new areas of support and influence. And both sides on occasion tested each other's resolution by acts of brinkmanship that threatened to set the whole world on fire. The Cuban missile crisis epitomized the dangers of confrontation in a thermonuclear age. Surely no one who endured that week with its eerie sense of a doomsday clock ticking relentlessly away will ever forget that the rivalry of the two most powerful nations on earth had reached a point where there was a serious possibility of their mutual extinction. Nor was the lesson lost on Moscow. Khrushchev summed it up in a memorable sentence: "There was a smell of burning in the air."⁹

We have reason to be profoundly grateful that this and other crises in Soviet-American relations have thus far been surmounted without a nuclear catastrophe. We have been compelled in recent years to learn a great deal about the art of crisis management; perhaps the time has come to address ourselves to the art of crisis prevention.

The question which I should like to pose this evening is whether we and the Soviet Union stand condemned to behave, in J. Robert Oppenheimer's metaphor, like two deadly scorpions in a bottle, "each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life,"¹⁰ or whether we can find a basis for living

⁷ Quoted in Walter Lafeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1966* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), p. 55.

⁸ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston: Atlantic, Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 354-367.

⁹ *Pravda*, December 13, 1962.

together peacefully by a joint recognition that our survival depends on the prevention of total war.

Let me begin, where foreign policy begins, with the two political systems and cultures that we are considering. In a much-quoted passage in *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835:

"There are, at the present time, two great nations in the world which seem to tend towards the same end, although they started from different points: I allude to the Russians and the Americans. Both of them have grown up unnoticed; and whilst the attention of mankind was directed elsewhere, they have suddenly assumed a most prominent place among the nations . . ."

"All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and only to be charged with the maintenance of their power; but these are still in the act of growth; all the others are stopped, or continue to advance with great difficulty; these are proceeding with ease and with celerity along a path to which the human eye can assign no term. The American struggles against the natural obstacles which oppose him; the adversaries of the Russian are men; the former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its weapons and its arts; the conquests of the one are therefore gained by the ploughshare; those of the other by the sword. The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends, and gives free scope to the unguided exertions and common sense of the citizens; the Russian centres all the authority of society in a single arm; the principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter servitude. Their starting point is different, and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems to be marked by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."¹¹

I cite this passage not because I subscribe to de Tocqueville's catalogue of American virtues and Russian vices, but because in an almost uncanny way, de Tocqueville more than a century ago, not only caught the dynamic quality of the two societies but pointed up the antithesis between a pluralist and an authority-dominated culture which present-day proponents of the theory of convergence tend to obscure. Because industrial societies tend to be alike in many respects, it does not follow that

they will be alike in all respects. Political ideas and movements have a vitality all their own; their development is not unilaterally determined by the discipline of the assembly line.

The Soviet political system is the outgrowth and projection of an authority-dominated culture; its ruling party elite arrogates to itself the right to determine the policies and programs which guide the destinies of the state. Its primary domestic objective has been rapid industrialization; indeed its historic achievement has been the transformation of a relatively backward society into an industrial and military super-power by authoritarian means. It has given priority to the development of heavy industry, science, and armaments while stinting on investments in agriculture, housing, and consumer goods. Its most fundamental concern has been its own survival and security, and it has based its security on a monopoly of political power and the building of industrial and military strength. Its suspicion and distrust of the so-called capitalist world have strong ideological roots in Marxism-Leninism; these have in turn been reinforced by the experiences of the Allied intervention and blockade during the Civil War, the Nazi invasion, and the Cold War. Its Leninist legacy had been a messianic dream of the triumph of Communism on a world scale, though messianism has waned as Soviet national interests have come to the forefront and met resistance from both Communist and non-Communist states. The imperial domain inherited from the Czars has become the focal point of a new Soviet patriotism; the Soviet leaders, like the Czars before them, have manifested a special interest in expanding Russian influence in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Straits, the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Mongolian and Manchurian borderlands.

At the same time a half century of Soviet rule has produced changes in Soviet society that impose brakes and restraints on the forward thrust of Soviet foreign policy. Revolutions have their own natural history. Over time they exhaust their revolutionary drive, and demands set in for normalization. The social changes which revolutions effect congeal into vested interests in the post-revolutionary status quo. The result in the Soviet Union has been to create a highly bureaucratized and stratified society resistant to change. While the economy is still capable of reasonably rapid growth, technological progress in such new industrial fields as automation, computers, petro-chemicals, and industrial research and development has lagged behind the United

¹⁰ J. Robert Oppenheimer, "Atomic Weapons and American Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 4, July 1953, p. 529.

¹¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Colonial Press, 1899), Vol. 1, pp. 441-442.

States, and problems of planning and industrial management have become increasingly intricate and difficult. The appetite for bourgeois amenities has never been sharper. After decades of deprivation and sacrifice under Stalin, the Soviet leadership is under increasing pressure to raise the living standards of its own people and to invest more heavily in its relatively backward agricultural sector. The generations that have come to maturity since Stalin's death can no longer be put off with promises of a future Utopia; they look for benefits in the here and now. And some among the scientific and creative intelligentsia have expressed open dissatisfaction with the policy of arrested de-Stalinization which the current leadership is following. They call for an end to literary trials and judicial arbitrariness, for a lifting of censorship, for a greater exchange of information on an international scale, for the right to travel abroad, and for a larger role in the shaping of their own destinies. "Today," in the words of the distinguished Soviet physicist Andrei D. Sakharov, "the key to a progressive restructuring of the system of government in the interests of mankind lies in intellectual freedom."¹² These demands arouse no enthusiasm in high Soviet party circles; they see the call for more freedom as a threat to their own power. Indeed, one of the primary reasons behind the decision of the Soviet Union and its client states to invade Czechoslovakia was the fear that the contagion of progressive liberalization would spread, not merely to neighboring Communist states, but to the Soviet Union itself. In the wake of events in Czechoslovakia one can only anticipate that the Soviet leadership will put even greater stress on the dangers from without in order to justify the suppression of the threat within.

The problems and dilemmas of the Soviet regime are not limited to domestic policy. As the historic leader and most powerful nation in what used to be called the Communist camp, the Soviet Union has proved powerless to arrest its crumbling structure. Yugoslavia asserted its independence early. China and Albania can now be counted Soviet enemies. Rumania has declared her economic independence and oriented much of her trade westwards. Czechoslovakia's valiant struggle to regain her freedom in both domestic and

foreign affairs could only be suppressed by brute force. Cuba is committed to its own brand of revolutionary guerrilla strategy. North Korea and North Vietnam represent arenas of combat in which both the Soviet and the Chinese leadership contend for influence. Only Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany can still be numbered among the Soviet faithful, and in the case of Hungary and Poland at least, the events of the year 1956 serve as a reminder of the tenuousness of their loyalty. Meanwhile, Communist parties throughout the world, from the largest to the smallest, have been emboldened to find their own voices and have not hesitated to disassociate themselves from Soviet policies when to do so served their own interest. The result is that world Communism is a house divided. There are no longer one, but many Communist truths. Nationalism has proved a corrosive force in eroding unity among Communist nations and parties. It should, perhaps, come as no great surprise that so powerful a force as nationalism should reappear in a Communist guise, but for those who have taken professions of brotherhood among Communist nations at face value, it has nevertheless come as a profound shock.

These developments have had two contradictory consequences for Soviet policy. They have left the Soviet Union with the problem of legitimizing its credentials as a revolutionary power; the aid extended to Cuba and North Vietnam serve this purpose. At a more fundamental level, they have exposed the brittleness of Bloc solidarity and thrown the Soviet Union back on its own resources. Its rhetoric continues to invoke the revolutionary phraseology of Marxism-Leninism. Its actual behavior is increasingly indistinguishable from that of any other Great Power.

As a Great Power its interests are worldwide, but its basic concerns focus on Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, and more particularly the areas bordering on the Soviet Union. The border states of Eastern Europe are deemed a vital part of the Soviet defense zone. Here the Soviet leadership insists on a tier of "friendly"—that is, Communist—states joined in a defense pact with the Soviet Union. It is opposed to any form of Western "bridge-building" to Eastern Europe which seeks to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and its East European allies.

The so-called Bonn-Washington axis is seen as the greatest threat to Soviet interests in Europe. With vivid memories of the massive destruction wrought on Russian soil by German armies in both World Wars, the Soviet

¹² See his essay, "Thoughts on Progress, Peaceful Co-existence, and Intellectual Freedom," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1968. This is one of many such statements which are denied publication in the Soviet Union, but which nevertheless circulate privately among the intelligentsia.

Union is prepared to do everything in its power to keep Germany divided, to press for the general recognition of East Germany's sovereignty, to isolate West Germany, and to deny it nuclear weapons. Its constant stress on the strength of revanchist forces in West Germany is designed to serve as a reminder to its East European allies that their true interests lie in relying on Soviet protection. The Soviet attitude toward the American presence in Europe has an element of ambiguity. The dominant line is to call for the withdrawal of American troops from West Germany, the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and the adoption of a new European security arrangement from which the United States would be excluded and in which Soviet influence would be paramount. But there are also occasional indications of grudging acceptance of the American presence and intimations that it may even play a stabilizing role in restraining Bonn's revanchist ambitions. The flirtation with de Gaulle provides an opportunity to weaken American influence in Europe, to disrupt NATO, and to isolate West Germany. But de Gaulle's Grand Design for a powerful French-led European Third Force arouses no enthusiasm in Moscow, which suspects with some reason that it may be directed equally against the Soviet Union and the United States.

Soviet policy in the Middle East is aimed at turning the flank of NATO and CENTO and becoming the dominant protector of Arab interests in the region. Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, one-time American client states, are being wooed with offers of both economic and military aid in the hope of inducing them to adopt a more friendly orientation toward the Soviet Union. The Soviet alignment with the Arab states, also cemented by extensive military as well as economic aid, is directed, not merely at Israel, but even more at the elimination of Western influence in the area.

On its Far Eastern and Central Asian borders, the Soviet Union confronts China, still relatively weak in military and economic terms, but nevertheless a power which has already demonstrated a nuclear weapons potential, which has placed its irredentist claims against the Soviet Union on record, and which, over the longer term, may develop into a formidable antagonist. Although hopes for the restoration of Sino-Soviet friendship after the passing of Mao are still expressed by the Soviet press, they are not asserted with much conviction. There is no disposition to underplay the threat from China. In language which would do our own Right-Wingers proud,

an authoritative Soviet commentator, writing under the pseudonym of "Ernst Henry," recently outlined what he called the "Mao plan" for world domination. Said this commentator, "Mao proposes to include in his Reich—in addition to China itself—Korea, the Mongolian People's Republic, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, and several other countries in the area. In the second stage of 'the storm from the East,' expansion is planned in the direction of the Indian subcontinent, Soviet Central Asia, the Soviet Far East and the Near East. What is anticipated on paper for the third stage is not yet clear. But the plan is not restricted to the 'Maoization of Asia.' We shall gaze proudly upon five continents, one of Mao-tse-tung's myrmidons declares."¹³

Faced with these vaulting ambitions, the Soviet Union has adopted a policy which we can readily recognize as our old friend, containment. It has strengthened its military units along the borders of the Soviet Far East, Central Asia, and Outer Mongolia, and it has provided military aid to India as well as aid to Pakistan to counter Chinese influence. Indeed, even the extensive military and economic aid which it has supplied to North Vietnam may be viewed, not merely as a demonstration of its willingness to come to the assistance of a brother Communist state in order to help it expel the American "imperialists," but also as an effort to decrease the North Vietnamese dependence on China and to reinforce historic Vietnamese resistance to Chinese domination.

Compared to the Soviet involvement in Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East, Soviet interests in other areas may be described as secondary. Like the United States, it has used trade, military and economic aid, technical assistance and cultural penetration in order to heighten its influence in the underdeveloped world, but in contrast to the diffuse American aid effort, the Soviet program has focused heavily on selected target countries. In the interest of improving relations with nationalist leaders in the new states, it has discouraged premature revolutionary bids for power by local Communists and concentrated instead on building up support within the ruling nationalist movements. It has sought to channel its aid to promote national democratic regimes—that is to say, regimes which stress a socialist path of development and can be

¹³ Ernst Henry (pseud.), "The View from the Pamirs," *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, September 27 and October 4, 1967.

counted on to support Soviet foreign policy objectives. But, like the United States, it has discovered that even very large scale military and economic aid can yield disappointing political results, and its experience in Indonesia and Ghana has been particularly disenchanting. Together with the United States, it has also discovered that most of the leaders of the new nations treasure their own independence above all other values, and that they welcome Soviet-American competition in aid-giving primarily as an opportunity to broaden their field of maneuver in order to promote their own interests.

Thus, the Soviet Union finds itself in a position well described by Maxim Litvinov, for many years Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, in his 1929 report to the Soviet Central Executive Committee:

"Unlike other Commissariats, the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs cannot, unfortunately, put forward a five-year plan of work, a plan for the development of foreign policy . . . In . . . drawing up the plan of economic development we start from our own aspirations and wishes, from a calculation of our potentialities, and from the firm principles of our entire policy, but in examining the development of foreign policy we have to deal with a number of factors that are scarcely subject to calculation, with a number of elements outside our control and the scope of our action. International affairs are composed not only of our own aspirations and actions, but of those of a large number of countries . . . pursuing other aims than ours, and using other means to achieve those aims than we allow."¹⁴

Like the United States, the Soviet Union must contend with a world in flux moving in directions which it may hope to influence, but which it cannot fully anticipate nor control. The solid, monolithic Communist bloc of Stalin's dream is no more; national communisms are on the rise, and the largest of these, China, is a sworn antagonist of the Soviet Union. The interests of the Soviet Union collide with the United States on many fronts, but where the containment of China is involved, they also run parallel and merge. The equation of Soviet-American relations has become infinitely more complex than it

gave the appearance of being in the simple days of a bipolar world.

The question for both the United States and the Soviet Union is not merely whether they can recognize these new complexities, but whether they can make constructive use of them to achieve a more satisfactory relationship. Recent events in Czechoslovakia do not create a propitious climate for such an effort. Nor can it be said that the American electorate is currently much interested in grappling with the problem. There is a widespread feeling of frustration growing out of America's multiple foreign involvements, a sense that the United States is over-committed abroad and under-committed at home. Racial conflict, riots and burnings in the black ghettos, the decay of the inner cities, the long-neglected demands of the black community and other minority groups for improved treatment, and the shockingly high incidence of poverty, crime, and violence have persuaded many Americans that the time has come for the United States to set its own house in order. The morass of Vietnam has significantly sharpened the feeling that America is over-extended. Balance-of-payment difficulties, disarray in NATO, the belief that allies are not carrying their fair share of the common burden, and disillusionment with foreign aid programs all contribute to a new mood of neo-isolationism. Its results are visible in cutbacks in foreign aid appropriations, in demands for the withdrawal of American troops from West Germany, and above all, in a widespread insistence that the Vietnamese war be brought to a quick end.

Meanwhile, American commitments continue to be global in scope. In Latin America the United States is a party to a hemispheric collective self-defense treaty and joint defense arrangements, though President Johnson's effort in the wake of the 1965 Dominican crisis to proclaim a new doctrine of unilateral American intervention to prevent the spread of Communism in the Western hemisphere, while approved by the House, was not accepted by the Senate. Under the terms of the NATO pact the United States is pledged to come to the aid of its NATO partners in the event of an armed attack against any one of them. Its responsibilities in Germany include the defense of West Berlin and a pledge to work for German unification. In the Middle East the United States has agreed to furnish military equipment to Israel, as well as to "moderate" Arab states; under the Eisenhower doctrine proclaimed in 1957 and approved by the Congress the President may send military forces to any nation in the Middle

¹⁴ From the report by Maxim Litvinov, Vice Commissar for Foreign Affairs, to the Central Executive Committee, December 4, 1929, translated in Jane Degras, *Soviet Documents in Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), Vol. 2, p. 408.

East which requests help in preserving "its independence and integrity." The United States is not a party to CENTO, but in effect it provides backstop support for that organization through its bilateral military aid treaties with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. In Southeast Asia the SEATO pact provides a basis for American intervention to resist armed aggression and counter subversive activities in the Philippines and Thailand, as well as South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, provided that the threatened government approves. The American Seventh Fleet stands guard in the Formosa Straits to assure the security of Taiwan and the Pescadores under the terms of a mutual defense pact with Chiang-Kai-Shek. Japan is bound to the United States by a mutual security pact which provides for the continuation of American military bases on Japanese soil, and a similar treaty commits the United States to the defense of South Korea. Under the terms of the so-called ANZUS Treaty the United States guarantees the security of both Australia and New Zealand.

These wide-ranging commitments, inspired variously by fear of aggression from the Soviet Union, Communist China, and local subversive Communist movements, place a heavy burden on Americans which many appear increasingly disinclined to bear. They note a spiralling defense budget of more than 80 billion dollars imposing sharp limits on the resources which are made available to solve America's own social problems, while the pressing needs of the poor nations of the world also suffer neglect. They see the casualty figures from Vietnam, not as abstract statistics but as the dead, the maimed, and the missing in their own families and neighborhoods. They watch with apprehension as those dear to them are called up for military service, and they fear that their country's self-appointed role as a world policeman may involve them in conflicts that will make Vietnam look like a minor skirmish. Some ask whether the United States cannot limit its commitments without endangering its vital interests and whether even the shocking Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia should be permitted to deter efforts to find terms of accommodation with the Soviet Union and other Communist states.

But such sentiments are by no means universally shared by Americans. Thus former President Eisenhower in his message to the 1968 Republican National Convention warned against a "growing disposition" toward "wishful thinking" which expressed itself in a search for "surface accommodations" with the Com-

munists. In Eisenhower's words, "Abroad, in every major sector, we confront a formidable foe—an expansionist tyranny which respects only toughness and strength. Today the Communists reach ruthlessly for domination over Southeast Asia. . . . In the Middle East, month by month they move closer to testing our resolution. The same is true in Korea. Constantly they stir new troubles in every area of weakness they can ferret out in Eastern Europe, in Africa and Latin America . . . they continue to expand their military power."¹⁵ And the tocsin which he sounded was no retreat.

Meanwhile, a number of steps have been taken which move in the direction of a Soviet-American detente. In the wake of the Cuban missile crisis arrangements were made for a direct line between Moscow and Washington, in order as President Kennedy put it, "to avoid on each side the dangerous delays, misunderstandings, and misreadings of the other's actions which might occur at a time of crisis."¹⁶ This action was followed by the conclusion of a treaty outlawing nuclear tests in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water, but leaving the parties free to conduct underground tests. In 1967 an Outer Space Treaty was approved prohibiting, among other things, the stationing of nuclear weapons in orbit. The very important non-proliferation treaty signed this year is accompanied by assurances from both the Soviet Union and the United States that they will come to the aid of any signatory non-nuclear weapon state that is threatened with nuclear aggression, an action which would presumably give India the assurance of protection against a Chinese nuclear attack. Explorations are under way to impose mutually agreed limits on the production of both offensive and anti-ballistic missiles. During the course of the past year both countries also reached an agreement to assist astronauts downed in either country, signed a consular treaty, inaugurated direct flights between New York and Moscow, and, after some delay, renewed their cultural exchange agreement.

Opinions will differ as to whether these are more than "surface accommodations." Certainly large and important issues continue to separate the United States from the Soviet Union. But these agreements do suggest that

¹⁵ *New York Times*, August 6, 1968.

¹⁶ President John F. Kennedy, "Toward a Strategy of Peace," (Commencement Address at American University, Washington, D. C., June 10, 1963), reprinted in Council on Foreign Relations, Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations*, 1963 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 121.

there are shared interests as well as great differences. The question is whether the interests that we hold in common provide a sufficient basis for a continuing search for a detente. The pursuit of such a goal is not likely to be easy. For however great may be the resistance of the Russians, a part of the trouble lies within ourselves. We are a nation torn by conflicting pressures, wavering between hopes for peace and fear of Communism, weary of foreign entanglements and yet fearful of abandoning them, more confident in our means than clear about our purposes, sure of our good intentions and frustrated when others do not recognize them, accustomed to victory and feeling betrayed when we must settle for less, believing that every problem must have a solution and baffled when none is forthcoming, impatient with long drawn-out negotiations yet compelled to learn how to make creative use of them if we wish to survive.

What then are the common interests of the Soviet Union and the United States on which we can build? The most basic is that neither of us would survive a nuclear conflict between us. President Kennedy summed it up well in his American University speech: "Today, should total war break out again—no matter how—our two countries would become the primary targets. It is an ironical but accurate fact that the two strongest powers are the two in the most danger of devastation. All we have built, all we have worked for, would be destroyed in the first 24 hours."¹⁷ Nor does Moscow dissent from this appraisal. As Khrushchev put it in an address to the East German Party Congress: "There is no doubt that if a thermonuclear war were unleashed by the imperialist maniacs, the capitalist system that gave rise to the war would perish in it. But would the socialist countries and the cause of the struggle for socialism throughout the world gain from a world thermonuclear catastrophe? Only people who deliberately close their eyes to the facts can think this. As far as Marxist-Leninists are concerned, they cannot think in terms of a Communist civilization built upon the ruin of the world's cultural centers, on ravaged earth contaminated by thermonuclear fallout. This is not to mention the fact that for many people there would be no socialism at all, since they would have been removed from the face of our planet."¹⁸

At the same time, both of the thermonuclear super powers are under great pressure to find, if they can, a solution to the problem of defense

against thermonuclear striking power. Both are seeking and will be seeking in areas of science still unknown and unexplored the secret of their future security. Given the dynamic quality of military technology in the last decades, it would be a rash prophet indeed who would predict that the world has seen the end of innovation in weaponry. Yet there appears to be a widespread consensus in both the Soviet and American scientific-technical communities that the technology and tactics of nuclear attack have so far outstripped the technology of defense that the obstacles to an effective missile defense, at the present time, are virtually insurmountable. Some military theoreticians may still dream of a situation in which a combination of overwhelming superiority in attack weapons and an effective missile defense may enable one or the other side to launch a preemptive attack with impunity. But most American experts would agree with the Soviet academician, A. D. Sakharov, who recently observed, "Fortunately for the stability of the world, the difference between the technical-economic potentials of the Soviet Union and the United States is not so great that one of the sides could undertake a 'preventive aggression' without an almost inevitable risk of a destructive retaliatory blow. This situation would not be changed by a broadening of the arms race through the development of anti-missile defenses."¹⁹

If these propositions are accepted as valid, they would suggest that the United States and the Soviet Union have a mutual interest in adopting a moratorium on the construction of anti-missile systems, in limiting the arms race in offensive weapons, and in seeking to "avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war."²⁰

The Soviet Union and the United States also share a common concern about Chinese nuclear developments and territorial ambitions. This concern has already led to parallel actions providing both military and economic support to India at the time of the Sino-Indian border conflict, to efforts independently pursued to ease Indian-Pakistani rivalry and to counter Chinese penetration in Pakistan, and, as has already been indicated, to joint guarantees under the non-proliferation treaty designed to prevent a nuclear power like China from directing its nuclear force against its non-nuclear neighbors. These actions do not necessarily mean, as Peking has charged, that

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁸ *Pravda*, January 17, 1963.

¹⁹ *New York Times*, July 22, 1968.

²⁰ President John F. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

a Soviet-American alliance is in the making. When two rivals join to ward off a threat from a third who menaces them both, their differences do not automatically disappear. They may submerge their differences in the interests of common action, but each may still hope to emerge as the ultimate victor.

Yet it is precisely because there can be no victor in a thermonuclear war that we must find new ways of muting the frictions and tensions that have characterized the Soviet-American relationship. As we look round the world from West Berlin and Germany through the Middle East to Southeast Asia, we see crises and confrontations looming before us in every direction. Is it beyond the wit of man to find ways of dealing with them before they burst upon us? I hope that I will not be misunderstood as suggesting that the United States and the Soviet Union can between them solve all the world's problems or that they can once and for all achieve a grand settlement of their differences. In a world of movement and change, where power configurations within and among nations shift over time, and the ambitions of sovereign nations clash, it is utopian to expect that conflicts can be eliminated. What is at issue is whether they can be moderated. Are there fresh initiatives which can be taken now which will avert future Soviet-American confrontations?

Let us look briefly at a few of the world's danger points. Clearly one of the most troublesome issues is presented by the problem of German unification and the future of West Berlin. Equally clearly, no progress is likely to be made in resolving this issue as long as the Soviet Union continues to adhere to a policy of two Germanys and regards Western proposals for unification through free elections as ill-disguised attempts to liquidate the Communist regime of East Germany and to tie the whole of Germany to the West. Are there other approaches to the problem of German unification, which can win both Soviet and Western acceptance, as well as the approval of the two existing German regimes? Is it too late to reconsider proposals for the neutralization of Germany as a condition of unification? Can a basis be laid for unification by an agreed mutual withdrawal of troops? Can unification be made acceptable within the context of a European community, free of both Soviet and American domination? I fully realize that each of these questions raises a host of problems, and indeed that the most formidable obstacle to unification is the fact that the two parts of Germany embody such diametrically opposed political systems. It may be that unification will come only when the evolution of social

and political forces in both East and West Germany prepares the way for it. I would only urge that where old formulas have brought us to a dead end the time may be ripe for fresh initiatives.

When we turn to the Middle East, the sense of an impending and almost unavoidable collision of Soviet and American power is heavy upon us. The decision of the Soviet Union after the six-day war to rearm its Arab clients has been met, if not matched, by American military aid to Israel. Efforts to reach agreement on a limitation of arms shipments to the area have thus far enjoyed no success. Soviet military personnel in increasing numbers are training Arab military forces, the Soviet Mediterranean fleet has been enlarged, naval bases have been established in Arab ports, the Soviet air lift capacity has been improved, and the possibility of direct Soviet military intervention in the area cannot be disregarded. Hopes of achieving a peace settlement between the Arabs and Israelis have centered on a resolution unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on November 22, 1967 which laid down certain principles to be accepted by both sides, including the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied territories, the termination of all claims of belligerency, the right of freedom of navigation, a just settlement of the refugee problem, and the guarantee of the territorial inviolability and political independence of every state in the area. Thus far the efforts of Ambassador Jarring, the United Nations Special Representative, to obtain agreement on a settlement in accordance with the resolution have not borne fruit. Arab terrorism and Israeli reprisal raids continue. The Israelis call for direct negotiations and a formal peace treaty with the Arabs. Leaders of the Arab cause refuse to recognize Israel and talk of reopening a holy war to put an end to the State of Israel.

Are there initiatives which the United States can still take in negotiations with the Soviet Union to prevent the Middle Eastern crisis from flaring up into a major confrontation? Is it too late to renew efforts to impose agreed limits on arms shipments to the rival parties? Can a joint arrangement be reached to refrain from direct military intervention in the area? Is there sufficient common interest in avoiding a major confrontation in the Middle East to provide a basis for joint pressure on both the Arabs and the Israelis to moderate their most extreme positions in the interest of a workable settlement? Again, I repeat that I am under no illusions about the difficulties which stand in the way of the

success of such efforts. I can only plead that not to try at all is a sure guarantee of failure.

Finally, let us turn to Southeast Asia. It is commonly assumed, and I believe correctly, that the termination of the war in Vietnam and the withdrawal of American troops would contribute to an easing of Soviet-American relations. But we would still be left with the problem of defining our future role in Southeast Asia and our obligations, such as they may be, to Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand, not to mention Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Would we, for example, dispatch troops to Laos to prevent a complete Pathet Lao take-over or send large military contingents to Thailand to help suppress a growing guerrilla movement? After our experience in Vietnam, it would appear most unlikely. Our proclaimed purpose in Southeast Asia is to assist nations whose self-determination is threatened and who want to help themselves. In practice this has meant providing help to non-Communist governments endangered by internal or external Communist subversion. In Vietnam this policy collided with the determination of both the Soviet Union and Communist China to help North Vietnam and the Viet Cong to overthrow the Saigon government and expel the Americans. Clearly, there can be no basis for a common Soviet-American policy in Southeast Asia as long as the United States is ready to suppress any bid to expand Communist power and the Soviet Union is prepared to assist so-called national liberation movements which the United States regards as thin veneers for Communist take-overs. Short of a mutual agreement to refrain from such intervention, perhaps the most that can be hoped for in the way of concerted policy is that the United States and the Soviet Union will take parallel actions in areas accessible to each of them to counter an expansion of Chinese power and influence in the region.

So far I have spoken mainly of conflicts and how they might be muted. But there are also opportunities for cooperation which have only begun to be explored. A start has been made in collaborative endeavor in Antarctica, in agreements for exchanges in scientific, technical, educational, cultural, and other fields, and in attendance and exchange of views by Soviet and American scientists and scholars at both national and international scientific conferences. But there are many other substantive fields in which collaboration would serve the interests of both nations. They include the exploration of space and of the ocean floor, attacks on the pollution of the environment, work on irrigation and the desalting of water,

the establishment of a global satellite communications system, weather forecasting, medicine, population control, increasing food supplies, and many others. The scientific community in both nations would eagerly welcome such cooperation.

Meanwhile, Soviet-American relations are still entangled in a complex web of rival ambitions and shared concerns. Both Soviet and American policy makers have been made vividly aware of the suicidal implications of a thermonuclear conflict; the result has been to increase pressure on both sides to behave with restraint in major confrontations of power. Both the Soviet Union and the United States feel threatened by the long-term potential of Communist China; the result has been to force them to think of themselves as possible allies as well as rivals.

With these developments in mind, it would be pleasant to end this discussion on the note that a war between the United States and the Soviet Union is now unthinkable. Moscow is more cautious. Its formulation is that war is not fatalistically inevitable. But even that is progress. For it opens the way to action directed at the prevention of conflict rather than to its passive acceptance. As the philosopher Karl Jaspers once wisely put it: "Anyone who regards an impending war as certain is helping on its occurrence, precisely through his certainty. Any one who regards peace as certain grows carefree and unintentionally impels us into war. Only he who sees the peril, and does not for one instant forget it, is able to behave in a rational fashion and to do what is possible to exorcise it."

"It is of crucial significance for the course of events whether the individual can endure to remain in suspense; or whether he flees into certainties. . . . The most compelling element in our lives is the fact that we do not know the future, but contribute toward its realization and see it loom before us incalculable in its entirety."²¹

Let me conclude in the words of President Kennedy: "There is no single, simple key to . . . peace, no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process, a way of solving problems."²²

²¹ Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p. 151.

²² President John F. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 118.