

America's Lack of Success in Europe

FAILURE TO TRANSPLANT DEMOCRACY ON LIBERATED SOIL

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MR. President, Trustees, Faculty and Graduates of Dartmouth College: My first desire is to express earnest appreciation of the honor of being associated with the Class of 1947 in receiving a diploma from this historic and respected institution. I am chosen to address you today in the hope, as I assume, that out of my experience with representatives of many countries in the trial of the Nazi war leaders I may contribute something to your knowledge of our most urgent problems.

Uppermost in the mind of every thoughtful youth today is this question: Will I have to go through another war? I cannot answer that question, of course, but perhaps I can point out some of the factors that will help you to determine the probabilities.

We must ask at the outset whether any nation is seeking deliberately to provoke or start a new war, for if it is, we may be certain some pretext for it will be found. We answer at once that we are not, and the accusing finger usually points at Soviet Russia. The closed frontier policy of the Soviet Union, so contrary to Western practice, naturally arouses Western suspicions and defeats any efforts

at mutual understanding. The Soviet representatives are difficult for us to deal with, often seem to be purposely so, and at times are belligerent in their statements. Their policy impresses us as aggressively expansionist, and, with our limited background in Russian history and affairs, to be deliberately provocative. Despite all these outward appearances, I think a dispassionate review of circumstantial evidence is convincing that the Soviet leaders want at all hazards to avoid actual war with the United States, at least in the near future.

Sober information is that the Russian people are depressed and baffled by this war talk, as are Americans. It is disillusioning to their masses, as it is to ours, to find the late effective alliance against the Nazi menace dissolving in mutual recriminations and charges that the menace is being continued by the other. But they have a much more lively appreciation of what war in the homeland means than we have. Russia suffered from the scorn and fury of the German invaders beyond our imagination. Russian casualties have been responsibly computed at no fewer than five million military and nine million civilian dead. If these

figures can be comprehended, they are staggering. The havoc of invasion in western Russian is still felt in every farm, village and city. Captured documents used at Nurnberg showed an unbelievable sadism toward the Eastern peoples. Men who live in dugouts and in huts in the shadow of the ruins of their homes do not yearn for more war. Of course, the economy of the country is wrecked much as ours would be if we were invaded on the Atlantic coast and destroyed as far as the Ohio River, including Pittsburgh. The Russian people had been ruthlessly driven to give every nerve and sinew to build up and modernize their industry under the repeated Soviet plans. They were sustained with the faith and promise that when these plans were fulfilled easier times would be the lot of all. These weary and desolated people know that because of war they must begin all over again, rebuild a large part of their industry and homes, and relocate much of their industry in more defensible areas east of the Ural Mountains. War with them was not a matter of giving up steaks and unessential gasoline to the war effort; it meant diversion from an already inadequate living standard. And now, burdens of reconstruction must be shouldered—burdens which our undestroyed country does not face. The Soviet government has admitted that its war-weary industry is seriously lagging in many branches. Labor discipline is strict; absence, slackness and lack of punctuality bring punishment. Returning soldiers who have observed a different way of life undoubtedly create social problems and discontents. All of these circumstances make it highly improbable that the Russian Government now desires renewal of war.

Nevertheless, there is a certain fatalistic feeling, which seems to have grown in both countries, that we must fight sooner or later, and some feel, therefore, that we had better fight sooner instead of later. I think the premise that war is inevitable is an unprovable and vicious one. What does Russia have that we want? What do we have that a country so rich in natural resources as Russia, wants? Neither has anything vital to the other's existence and nothing worth a fraction of the cost of taking it by war. The only things we are likely to quarrel about do not presently belong to either of us but are the possession of third parties. We are in severe and bitter competition to win these third parties to our respective spheres of influence, and the question is whether this kind of rivalry will result in armed hostilities.

If no one really wants a war, and if the stars do not make war our inevitable fate, it comes to this: The hazard of war is measured by the danger that the world will simply blunder into it. That is a considerable risk, and it justifies your deepest anxiety. Wars have not often come as result of a deliberate and conscious public decision. They are consequences of policies and commitments whose effects, when made, were but half realized, even by the men who made them. By the time the people have awakened to know that an issue of war or peace exists, it usually is too late to have a real choice and events have dictated the decision.

If war comes by blundering, there is at least some chance that it will be by an American blunder. Any miscalculations, overreachings, or reckless talking on our part can be as decisive in bringing about catastrophe as those of any other country. A very large, perhaps the largest, factor, in keeping the future peace of the world will be the state of public opinion and information right here in the United States.

It would be wholesome, too, if we realize that we, as well as other peoples, are susceptible to errors of judgment and misleading information. We are far from Europe,

generally unversed in its history, geography and its many languages, interests and conflicts. Lack of understanding and interest is easily the characteristic of our democracy most likely to lead us into jeopardy. Let us look backward candidly. Did not American public opinion tragically underestimate the strength of Hitler, the staying power of Russia, the striking power of Japan? Did we not overestimate the resistance of France and the power of Great Britain, particularly in outposts like Singapore? Certainly a right impression of the immediately available strength of both our friends and our foes is elementary information in making foreign commitments. We were misinformed, even in high places, on both in the late war. Fortunately, some of the errors in calculation, notably that in the case of Russian resistance, worked in our favor and time was given to overcome other errors, which may not occur again. I find today little public realization that we won this war by a perilously narrow margin and owe much to the blunders of the enemy; another factor that we cannot always count on.

We must regard as dangerous to our security, as well as to our peace, the tendency to adopt the spirit of Cleopatra, who is said to have practiced beheading messengers who brought her bad news. A mature and prudent attitude would be to welcome any reliable information and to face squarely its implication, and to encourage every honest criticism of our course. Our critical faculties are too little used, and too much we over-simplify our problems by resort to slogans. Some of the bromides which take hold of our thinking and talking are so misleading that they only build us up for disillusionment.

One of the most contagious half-truths of the past decade has been the "one world" slogan. As a geographical observation, it was neither novel nor relevant to our problems. As an observation of political systems or philosophy, economics or cultural outlook, it was fallacious. But it induced such a covey feeling that no public man dared question it. So, it is now a psychological jolt to the mass of Americans to find that East still is East, and West still is West, and if ever the twain are to meet, it is not in our time. We have become fairly hysterical suddenly to realize that the only real truth in the slogan about "one world" is that we have no place else to go and so can't get away from the uncongenial people that inhabit it with us. Some Americans react violently to the discovery that, after all, there are at least two worlds and jump to the conclusion that we must fight it out to show that ours is the better.

If we do not drift or stumble into war, our position vis-a-vis Russia seems certain to be one of fierce and lasting political and economic competition over most of the world. Russia is the natural leader, if not the dictator, of all that growing block of nations which are under the authoritarian system of government. The United States has become leader of all those which adhere to the Western concept of democratic government. The two systems are irreconcilable. Wherever the authoritarian system exists, it not only refuses the slightest compromise with our ideas, but it does not even tolerate the presence of persons who accept them. Similarly, we are forced to protect our own system from subversion by measures to prevent infiltration by persons of Soviet allegiance. Nor can we, with loyalty to our own free government, compromise with the principles of authoritarian regimes. The school of collectivist-liberals in this country who would adopt, at least in part, the Communist program which relates to property rights, overlooks the fact that no country yet has started upon a collectivist economic program that did not end by destroying every vestige of what we call civil liberties. Until the experiment of some people demonstrates that a collectivist state can be estab-

lished and can exist without becoming a police state, we must regard the two as inseparable and irreconcilable with the principles under which we have been organized and have achieved phenomenal success.

It may appear inconsistent to acknowledge irreconcilable conflict and world-wide rivalry between Russia and ourselves and at the same time to maintain that it need not lead to a war. Perhaps I have been rendered naive by successful cooperation with the Soviet, as well as our other Allies, in connection with the Nurnberg trial. The Soviet government joined us in the Agreement of London which, for the first time in history, declared unambiguously that it is an international crime to plot, prepare or wage a war of aggression. The Soviet joined in prosecuting, convicting and executing German leaders for that offense. To now engage in a war of aggression would stultify Russia before the world.

But we did not declare any method of exerting influence on another country except by physical force, to be a crime. Neither the United States nor any other country was prepared to go beyond outlawing actual use of military force. I am satisfied that Russia intends, without resorting to armed aggression, to use other methods not outlawed in the Nurnberg compact, to match us in competition for the favor of other people. Such weapons include peaceful infiltration of their societies, support of underground movements, capitalizing threat of military measures short of war, incitement to revolution, and propaganda appeals.

For those who believe ardently in our system and way of life, it is baffling and deflating to find so much of the liberated world, which we had thought to be our debtors, rejecting our leadership and example in economic, political, moral and intellectual matters. Not one of the liberated countries, nearly all of which have reorganized their governments, has adopted our constitutional democracy with its three-way presidential-congressional-judicial separation of powers. Not one has copied our Bill of Rights. The drift of the world since the war has been more towards Russia's system than towards ours. It is proceeding even in countries such as England, where it owes little, if anything, to Russian pressures.

The prevailing American view of the choice we hold out to troubled peoples is simple. It is a political system founded on a majority rule, with toleration and civil rights for minorities and individuals, including freedom of press, screen, radio, speech, religion and assembly, and an economic order of free private enterprise which, in the American environment, has proven the greatest producer of goods and wealth and the highest standard of living the world has seen. We are just as fully convinced that Soviet leadership offers nothing but dictatorship, suppression and poverty. Our citizens, viewing the choice to be as simple as that, cannot understand what is wrong with countries that reject our beneficent and unselfish proffers to expand the area of our way of life. What is wrong?

In the first place, we have put Russia in a position of tremendous advantage in dealing with timid, demoralized and war-weary peoples. They know that she has armed forces in the occupation areas several times the number of our own; that delay in making peace defers indefinitely the departure and demobilization of the Red Army, and that even then Russian influence will be permanently backed by armed forces nearby. Counsels of prudence and expediency are whispered by leaders everywhere that the smaller countries must get along with Russia, even though the behavior of the Red Army makes many silent enemies.

Russia and the United States pursued opposite policies after the German surrender. The lot of Russian occupation soldiers, who live as much as possible off the land and are

paid in occupation marks printed in Germany, has been sufficiently comfortable so that there was no overwhelming demand among them to return home. It has been comparatively easy, as well as good for her prestige, for Russia to maintain strong occupation forces. We, on the contrary, without awaiting settlement of any of the war problems, embarked on a redeployment program. Now, I fully sympathize with the urge of Americans to get home and with the desire of parents and loved ones to get our men back. But that did not change the effect on Europeans of a withdrawal which seemed over there to be almost of panic speed. I witnessed its effect on the attitude of our late enemies and our Allies. They had admired the American Army as a matchless fighting army. But they began to doubt American understanding of the magnitude of the reorganization that was pending in Europe, and to question our determination to stand by the really democratic forces until they could establish themselves. The result is that our representatives in Europe have been left with support that is comparatively inadequate to their tasks, which raises in Russian and other European minds doubts whether we have not disabled ourselves from quickly backing up our diplomatic position. We must expect Russia at all times to take full advantage of any pacifism or want of preparedness on our part.

But most important of all, it seems to me we fail to appreciate the skill and effectiveness of the Soviet propaganda appeals to the depressed peoples of the world, and overestimate our own. Tyranny and poverty, which we say are Russia's only contributions, are not so shocking or fearful to people who have never known anything else. This is the case in Greece, the Balkans, Hungary and the Near and Middle East.

Also, our liberty and prosperity are presented to the masses of Europe in a very different light than we see them. Of course, all have been impressed with our productive capacity as demonstrated by the war. But our minority problems and injustices are played up, our industrial strife is magnified and capitalized, the extravagance and vulgarity of our wealthy are caricatured, the conflict and indecisiveness of our political system is pointed out, and, most of all, our alternating periods of depression and activity, deflation and inflation, are pictured as cause of much of the world's distress and woe.

Our economic system of private enterprise does not awaken enthusiasm among those masses, for they do not, in their impoverished countries, expect to become prosperous under any system. If they can be assured of elementary necessities, they will forego hope of luxuries. Living in have-not lands, they simply cannot understand a country that is worried over what to do about surplus production. For example, can you imagine the reaction of hungry and destitute people to the recent photograph of the destruction in the United States of huge piles of potatoes? Our system is too complicated and immense for these simply agricultural and handicraft people to appreciate, and its advantages to us they regard as unattainable to them.

I am fearful, too, that our extension of loans and credits is often stripped of its intended influence by skillful propaganda. The masses are taught, sometimes with too much reason, that the benefit of our largess stops with too few, and among them too many bankrupt adventurers, moth-eaten nobility and corrupt politicians. Our wealth often offends more than it wins; it is difficult to avoid giving the impression that we are buying friendship. After all, who loves a creditor?

We must not forget that those who dwell on the periphery of Russia are poor peoples, and with the Soviet they

have a fellowship in poverty. They have been governed by weak tyrannical and corrupt governments. Upper classes have been discredited by collaboration with the Germans in many cases, or can be plausibly, if wrongly, accused of it in others. The anti-communist forces are weak. The Soviet propaganda is skillful in identifying us with discredited regimes and in arousing prejudice against our influence. The Soviet understand these people and these tactics better than we do.

But, also, I think we have underestimated the skill of the Soviet appeal to the intelligence and emotion of depressed peoples in all the world for a moral and spiritual leadership. To most of us she could make no such appeal. But she does make vast numbers of converts to her leadership, and they are fanatical in her support.

I have been impressed by an event which might not be important if it stood alone, but which seems to illustrate how the Soviet Union is conducting on this higher level its competition with the United States for leadership in Europe. It has to do with the exploitation of their part in the Nurnberg trial of Nazi war criminals.

Some days ago I accepted an invitation to view a documentary film of the Nurnberg trial made in the U.S.S.R. and being exhibited in all parts of the world, and in appropriate languages. The film is not untrue to the facts, although, of course, it necessarily makes many omissions, and it may not be well adapted to American taste. I see nothing in it which indicates any purpose unfairly to represent the attitude or effort of the United States, Great Britain or France. But legitimately and capably it plays up Russia's part. It emphasizes her contribution, and its sequence and context are such that one whose only source of information was the film would get the impression that the Red Army won the war, captured most of the prisoners, suffered the greatest losses, and that the Nurnberg trials were pretty much a Russian enterprise. I repeat that this is not unfairly done, however. It is a legitimate and intelligent capitalization of the Soviet part in the trial. And if any American is interested in seeing a film of the trial, he can only see the Soviet version. Without going into detail, it is enough to say that the part of the United States in the trial was sufficient so that if it has good will or moral value, we, better than any other country, would be able to capitalize it. But no American version has been put before any European, or even American, audiences. Probably it would not be a commercial success.

The Soviet are not stopped by that. They believe there is good-will value in having it known that they participated in this trial. The prosecution bespoke the grievances of the destitute of Europe and vindicated their right to live. It reaffirmed or announced principles that, to these people at least, had great spiritual and intellectual appeal. It taught that to plot and execute a war of aggression is a crime which includes all other crimes, and that those individuals who break the peace of the world, no matter how powerful, are on the legal and moral level of common criminals. The people there have an abiding faith that these things for which we stood at Nurnberg are right, and it keeps them from sinking into utter despair to believe these principles are becoming the foundation of a new law and order. I have seen ample evidence of their deep gratitude to the United States for the part it took in trying to give to International Law what Woodrow Wilson described as "the kind of vitality it can only have if it is a real expression of our moral judgment." A large part of Europe is being taught that the Soviet, almost alone, accomplished this.

I can scarcely be accused of making an over-optimistic appraisal of the inheritance you will soon take over from

my generation. Your heritage of western culture can easily turn out to be like a bountiful gift in a pauper's will. If the legacy is encumbered with necessity for another war, we have left you nothing but what you can salvage from ruins. Your mission, then, would be to cushion as much as possible the decline of the West—for another war will be destructive to our free political and social system, no matter whether we win or lose. But make no mistake about it: Either you must get ready to fight and keep ready to fight (and keeping ready to fight will keep you poor and burdened all your lives), or you must develop working understandings with this inevitable Soviet competition.

My experience in getting along from day to day for nearly a year and a half with leading representatives of the Soviet legal world, in an enterprise as difficult as reconciling our widely separated legal concepts into a cooperative trial procedure and prosecution, leads me to believe that we can reach working understandings with them. May I make a few commonplace and general suggestions:

We cannot appease or flatter our way to understanding. I agree fully with General Mark Clark, and others, that our policy must be firm and definite. But we cannot be firm if we take weak or indefensible positions; we cannot be definite with others if we are confused among ourselves.

We cannot hold to an intelligent and consistent policy in this democratic country if we do not have a public mind open to information and reason. If every public man who differs with prevailing conceptions or misconceptions is to be branded a Communist and thereby disposed of, you may as well give up the effort to keep peace. Prejudice, stimulated by passion, is the most immediate enemy of America. Peace will require great wisdom and some forbearance on our part. For instance, can we simply say that Russia must take no interest in the kind of government that is to control certain of her border states, which again and again have been highways for invasion of her country? Must we not appraise her claims and conduct in the light of her history and experience? Our Government is properly responsive to public opinion and only an informed and dispassionate influence will help to keep us on the path of reason.

The Russians are a proud, sensitive and patriotic people. They are more easily hurt and embittered by insult or scorn than most peoples. We should be candid with them, even blunt. They, themselves, have an unsophisticated directness at times. But we must not be oversubtle, overbearing or disrespectful if we do not want to alienate not only the Russian masses, but the masses of other countries who feel their lot in life is closer to that of the Russian people than to ours. One of the difficulties on this score is that, for propaganda purposes among these people, our adversaries will attach the same importance to unofficial and irresponsible utterances in America as to the most carefully considered official ones.

Above all else, we must make no threats that we are not able to carry through and ready to carry through at whatever cost. The Soviet will go to any ends to avoid "loss of face" themselves, for to them it means loss of respect. If we lose face, we forfeit their respect which, by our war-time performance, we had won. If we once pawn that asset, we will be a long time in redeeming it.

But, why go on? It was all summed up centuries ago in the Golden Rule. It is still the most valid and self-enforcing rule in our law. If you hold to it and the spiritual values it embodies, we will avoid the prayer of the thoughtless nations:

"For frantic boast and foolish word
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord."