

The United States and Europe

THE PROMISE OF sensible, rational, mutually advantageous developments in the area of American-European relations is superficially more glittering now than it has been since the early days of the NATO alliance. In economic policies, the United States and the countries of the Common Market, with the exception of France, aim at fostering wider trading areas, reducing tariffs and any other artificial restraints to the exchange of products wherever trading can have a free run. In political matters, since the invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, Western European critics of the United States are far less inclined to wish to see the American presence in Europe diminished to a shade that can be exorcised or summoned at will. The rising tide of anti-Americanism, that was given great impetus by the Vietnam War, has at least been held in check by the force of the more than two hundred thousand East Bloc troops that moved swiftly into Czechoslovakia. Europe has always been sensitive to troop movements, even a few regiments sent up to a frontier have been immediately registered in the seismographs of European capitals and this massive movement of Warsaw Bloc forces had no need of the seismographs in chancelleries, every man and woman in the street registered the change out of their own experience. Thus the illusion of the last decade, that Europe was

safe for a long time to come, that it could, like Japan, indulge itself in the ever-mounting luxuries of peacetime with the comforting notion that both non-European powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, had successfully nullified one another's atomic arsenals leaving Europe not only in a state of *détente* but in a state of a peaceful euphoria—this illusion was rudely shaken.

It is all too easy to think in terms of a stable, ordered, long-range peaceful community achieved by rhetoric when the going is relatively easy. It is then that traditional patterns of thinking like de Gaulle's can be tried out in their new blueprints; a Europe happily free of non-European powers, of both Russia and the United States, under the hegemony of France, economically and militarily flourishing as a third great power, not to be told off again by outsiders—as France and England were at the time of the Suez crisis; in short, a Europe combining the politics of Richelieu and the high living of the 1960s. And such a program, although demonstrably short-sighted, is not without its reasonable grounds. Western Europe has had good reason, at times, to be doubtful that they might not fall victim to an American-Russian agreement made at their expense. The spirits of Camp David, of Glassboro, and

so many other encounters of short-lived hope could, if pressed too far, leave West Germany, for example, permanently divided and with such armed forces as she has under the command of an organization that has lost its vitality, for without the unswerving support of the United States, NATO is a paper shield. Developments such as the long, inconclusive war in Vietnam, and even the Pueblo affair, have made it seem likely to many friends of the United States that American power, for the time at least, has been stretched about as far as it will go, or as far as prudent American political leadership would have it go. Russian goals of containing Red China in the Far East, above all of preventing any kind of Japanese-Chinese bloc, of aiding wars of liberation like the one in Vietnam, are being attained by means that do not require the participation of Soviet fighting troops in the front lines as has been true for years of American soldiers in Korea and in Vietnam. And in Europe when the time came for the invasion of Czechoslovakia, it was accomplished by a direct order from Moscow and accepted without debate by the other members of the Warsaw Pact who participated. The United States must pursue its policies under vastly different conditions, it cannot by itself order NATO into action, it cannot send its tanks and the tanks of its allies into the cities and villages of a state that only last night was part of its bloc and then tell its NATO partners that their sovereignty is of no importance compared with the overriding importance of defending capitalism. But the Soviet Union can do all these things, and this is precisely the claim that it made to justify its actions when it announced the overriding necessity of defending the socialist world when any one of the members of the East Bloc is endangered by nonconformists within or revanchists without.

Nationalism in all the countries of East Europe, but especially in Romania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, and Yugoslavia, as well as separatist or particularist movements within those countries all take the form of moves toward decentralization, toward polycentrism, toward a revival of an ethnic or national history, away from Moscow. That the Soviet Union will permit Romania more autonomy than is accorded Czechoslovakia is due almost entirely to the geographic situation of the Czechs. It is one thing for the Romanians to remain aloof when the East Bloc war cries resound against Israel, it is quite another when the Czechs bordering on West Germany show signs of turning toward the West in any important matters whether cultural, or economic, or political. If the Russian nightmare in the Far East is an alliance of the Chinese and the Japanese, in the West it is a strong Germany, backed by its NATO allies and the United States in any kind of *Drang nach Osten*. Soviet policy in the West continues along the same lines as it has since the formation of NATO—to weaken that organization as far as possible, if it can't be gotten rid of it entirely; to edge the United States out of Europe; and to isolate West Germany. Any attempt toward a conciliatory West German Eastern policy—such as was urged for years by the *Bundesrepublik's* Social Democrats and to some extent carried out under the foreign ministry of Willy Brandt—is met with prompt hostility by the Soviet Union and the East German government.

In the West, too, the signs of increasing nationalism, of getting away from under Washington, have been evident. France under de Gaulle pursued her recently chosen courses that de Gaulle imagined would bring her great power stature, anti-British, anti-American, anti-NATO; West Germany, for the first time, refused to act in a spirit of humble reconciliation with de Gaulle who

has just come close to recognizing the permanence of the Oder-Neisse boundary, and refused to revalue the mark to help the French government to live beyond its means. The West European trend toward more independent foreign policies—of trading with and recognizing Red China, for example—of dealing more closely with the East Bloc, of mounting resentment and criticism of the United States has led some European observers to believe that the time may come when some sort of Rapacki plan of a neutral zone comprising both East and West Europe might become a reality. It could be, they say, assented to by the United States as an extension of the *détente*, and by the Soviet Union which in exchange would achieve its goal of getting the United States out of Europe and at the same time reducing the latent menace of a West Germany which it regards as the edge of the American glacié on the frontier of its domain. But these are the speculations mainly of people who lack confidence in the United States and who have mixed feelings for the Soviet Union.

At this point in history, the national interests of both the countries of the East and West blocs and of those between—like Yugoslavia—point toward preserving the *status quo*. Unlike the situation in the 1930s and 1914, few countries in Europe have any bleeding frontiers. With the exception of the Oder-Neisse territories of Germany and the tribulations of the Austrian population of the Italian Tyrol, the people of Europe are at least reluctantly content with their boundaries and even with the balance of power between East and West as they now exist. Germany and Berlin are divided and the *Bundesrepublik's* allies give lip service to the necessity for reunification, but the division in Germany, too, is accepted as a fact and among many governments both East and West it is considered desirable.

Europe is in no danger from the *status quo* on the continent. Berlin is intermittently rocked by the propaganda wars, but it, too, is part of the *détente* marking the fields of force where the two worlds meet and rest on their arms. The grave danger to the American-European alliance lies primarily in other parts of the world, in the Middle East for example, where France has moved over to the neighborhood of the Soviet-Arab camp and where any day could see the resumption of fighting that, if it lasted longer than the Israeli-Arab six-day war of 1967, might well spread to far wider areas. Even Castro's Cuba, Santo Domingo, and other countries of Latin America are more likely settings for brush-fire wars that—like Vietnam—may involve both worlds, than are the countries of Europe.

It is primarily the United States that for better or worse will continue to guide the defense policies of the European nations. They form of themselves too amorphous a coalition to have anything approaching the strength to create the independent and countervailing forces that General de Gaulle had in mind. When the Russians march into Czechoslovakia, the countries Gaulle had in mind. When the Russians of Western Europe look not to themselves but to the United States for reinsurance against a further Soviet advance; and this is as true for the French for all their atomic weapons as it is for the Germans without them. It is at this point that the belief in the durability of the *status quo* and in the satiety of the Soviet Union is shaken and the threat of Soviet power reasserts itself.

The crucial questions then for these countries are how reliable is the United States? To what extent are American vital interests parallel or identical with their own, so that they may depend on the collective defense that NATO calls for where an attack on one of the partners will bring all of them into action? Such questions are

answered in different ways in different capitals at different times, for those old societies have long racial and ethnic memories that become more vivid as the immediate dangers subside. But Europe has no alternative to this military alliance. Short-lived ideas of a world order of peace-loving states, of the four policemen who once long ago at the time of Teheran were supposed to patrol the world on behalf of these peace-loving states have gone the way of an international force of Keystone cops. The United Nations are looked on now by both East and West as a convenient propaganda forum, a meeting place where nudges may be given and received and aggressors denounced, but the U.N. is no longer a forum of man's hopes for peace or the base of an international army intent on putting down evil-doers. American policy hammered out in the hard realities of post-World War II has become far more realistic than it was in the days of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, disarmament treaties, and the long and repetitive articles in learned journals about the World Community and the necessity for treating aggression as a criminal act.

But always lurking between the lines of public pronouncements are the old ghosts, the old phantasies that since 1917 have enticed both liberals and conservatives—especially in the United States—with the idea that the Communists are just another political party and that once the Communist countries attain a decent standard of living, once they are convinced that the United States really means well by them and will not organize an encirclement of them, we can all live together happily if not in one, then in two worlds. The ever-ready praise of the Soviet Union when it has given American presidents and other high officials, as well as the *New York Times*, the slightest occasion for it is matched only by their short-lived disappointment when the

Soviet vetoes some measure they take to be on behalf of the peace they seek, or openly takes hostile positions in Cuba, Korea, Vietnam or moves its troops and tanks into Berlin or Poland or Hungary or Czechoslovakia. But the hopeful theory of convergence, the need for showing our good faith and allaying the seemingly bottomless, as well as ill-founded, suspicions of the rulers of Russia and other members of the East Bloc, are deep articles of faith that will reappear as soon as the dust of each crisis settles. We have some evidence, for example, that former President Johnson even after the invasion of Czechoslovakia was anxious to initiate talks with Messrs. Brezhnev and Kosygin despite the consternation this quasi-recognition of the legality of an act of sheer force would have spread throughout the nations of the West and many countries of East Europe as well.

Such unilateral acts of confidence and good will have been conspicuous and far-reaching in their consequences over a period of decades and, allied with a vague internationalism, they have succeeded in producing the state of permanent world crisis in which we live. But the actual, direct American experiences with world politics have rubbed away many of the unrealistic notions of a world order; it is these experiences which have led the countries of West Europe, and the United States as well, to rely far more on regional pacts like NATO than on their own divided strength or on the U.N. which, without the surrender of sovereignty that no nation in the world would give it, could not operate in the image in which it was conceived. The essence of international life, as it is of all biological forms, is to retain the imprint of the past and yet to change; and in international affairs the possibility of change must exist without every minor realignment of forces triggering a major war on the pretext that an assault has been made on a

nonexistent world order. What is fortunate in the present European situation is that illusory notions of the kind that sired the League and the U.N. have been burned away by the experience of the last generation and of this one. No country in Europe relies on the U.N. for its security, but they do rely on their respective pacts and on the two great powers that guarantee their efficacy. So the United States and Europe have the opportunity to deal forthrightly with realities, and these realities fortunately include the moral values they share, the similar cultures, and the identical goals of preserving them not only against communism but against the anarchism that seems to be an inseparable part of the affluent societies that promise and produce so much and leave so much unfulfilled.

It is melancholy, for example, to reflect on the diminishing of the British estate in these last years. In the early twentieth century Britain was the foremost power in the world, flourishing economically, sure of its mission and with not only its flag planted throughout the globe but its civilization as well. Joyce Cary gives a touching picture of the unconscious effects of the British mission when he has one of his sympathetic black characters, who has never been outside his native district in his life, talk of "going home to England." No country performs admirably on all fronts and at all times, but the British had done well in the annals of the civilization despite many and repeated lapses, and it remains to be seen whether the new countries it has left as a legacy of its imperial standards will do nearly as well. But Britain is a shadow of its former power; after two victorious wars and a technological revolution it helped to set in motion it is reduced in its economy and perhaps even in its self-regard below the two nations it has helped to defeat, Japan and Germany. The Soviet Union is not responsible for this change in the for-

tones and position of Britain but a whole series of developments that occurred as much within the British empire as outside it.

The renunciation of grandeur may have its beneficent as well as its negative aspects. In Italy, for example, the idea of an imperium that led Italians by the thousands to cheer and march for Mussolini is entirely dead. No more heady dreams of an Italian Ethiopia and an Italian dominated Balkans, no more shouts for Nice or Corsica being returned to Italy. The Italians are reasonably content with their industrial, aesthetic and cultural revival and although millions of them vote against the establishment and seemingly against the Western orientation of their foreign policy, their Communist party, too, finds it necessary to denounce the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and in no part of the electorate are there any signs of a return of the dream of mighty armed forces and a major role in Europe and Africa. Italy, like Britain, accepts a reduced status in the age of the superpowers; she has no interest in German reunification, the only border-land that disturbs her is her own South Tyrol where the Austrians of Italian nationality wage an intermittent partisan war against the Italianization of their province. Thus in Italy, too, any threats to her security come from inside the country, from the large section of the electorate that rejects or would like to water down the Western alliance and enter either a zone of neutralist powers or the Eastern alliance. The scars of the defeat and whatever laurels may have been plucked from the victory that resulted when the nation abruptly changed sides in World War II are worn lightly. The Italian people were led into both of the world wars against what would undoubtedly have been an overwhelming majority of the country had a plebiscite been held in either case.

The United States is a nation at the peak

of its power in the economic, technological, and military complex, sporadically intent on certain goals and then wavering and self-doubting with regard to these and others. The Vietnamese war is the symbol of these conflicting tendencies. No question can exist in the minds of anyone save the most doctrinaire but that such a war could have been won speedily and economically had the military power of this country been fully brought to bear on behalf of a speedy victory. But it was a presidential war, a war which involved the commitment of more than a half million men thousands of miles from the United States not by a declaration of war by Congress but by a series of Presidential orders. It is therefore an undeclared war, a limited war prosecuted piecemeal, and because the risks of bringing in either Russia or China or both were unacceptable to the administration that was responsible for the commitment of the mass of the troops, it was a war fought inconclusively and at a cost that seemed to an increasing number of Americans incommensurate with any victory that might eventually be achieved. The allies that once in the age of innocence were supposed automatically to join in the *posse comitatus* against the aggressor were sparse, and it must have become plain to even the most stubborn advocate of collective action on behalf of moral principles that nations simply do not risk the lives and treasure of their people on behalf of any such dicta but only on behalf of what they take to be their own vital interests; their security.

It is here that our present situation with regard to Europe is manifestly different—it is in the individual and common interest of the United States and of every state in West Europe to provide for the defense of the alliance; a continent controlled by the Soviet Union would force the United States to breathe economically with one

lung, not to mention the impairment of our strategic position and the inevitable consequences of our isolation in every other part of the world. For Western Europe, the alliance is a matter of life and death as far as the independence of national cultures and political traditions are concerned. There is no substitute for this alliance in the foreseeable future. Thus, what NATO offers us all, Western Europe and the United States as well, is the only kind of collective security that has any validity in the contemporary world, for it is forged out of common needs and purposes and with no echo of the cries for a spurious global police force of which we have found by experience we are the only active member. Our goals should have again become clear, as they were in the early days of the Republic; they are not goals of world peace which is so often trotted out as the pious hope of this well-meaning land. Since the end of World War II there have been no less than fifty-four armed conflicts, revolutions, police actions, wars of one kind or another. They continue the ancient pattern of resolving conflicts by conflict despite the dire threat of the atomic bomb and the lofty findings of the Nuremberg Trials that found aggression to be a criminal offense. It is a depressing fact that we have as yet found no substitute for the force of arms as the *ultima ratio* when irreconcilable quarrels between nations reach their critical mass. The United States cannot prevent them, but what it can do is to lend its assistance to those peoples who are ready to sacrifice and defend themselves against the encroachments of a Communist attack. And this does not mean the fighting presence of American soldiers in every part of the globe; for the direct intervention of our armed forces must be reserved for the areas deemed vital to the protection of this country and after the most searching scrutiny of the priorities of these vital interests.

The United States has the means to carry out a successful policy of containment and of maintaining Western superiority without bankrupting itself or draining its resources of manpower, raw materials, and industrial production. But the problem is obviously not one of manpower and physical resources alone. We, like the countries of West Europe, face an internal crisis of great dimensions. Part of it may be seen in the revolt in the universities, where it merges with the race conflict; in the violence of our cities, where the lack of security has brought about in some areas a demand for the private organization of elementary protections. Hand in hand with these well-known phenomena are others that also betray a deep change in contemporary attitudes toward the homeland, the defense of the nation. The repute of the internal forces of law and order is not high among the youth of the nation, or among its intelligentsia, and the dim view extends to the armed forces. When universities like Yale and Harvard stop giving academic credit for ROTC courses and withdraw faculty ranking from the officers teaching them, we witness a considerable change in the attitude of the predecessors of the same young men who joined the Lafayette escadrille a half century ago during World War I. The attitude may arise, as it has in so many countries, out of the disillusionment of the young men who returned from fighting on behalf of world democracy or of the peaceloving nations or of some other abstract goal, but what of the changed climate among the faculty, the alumni, and students who for years fostered or at least accepted such courses and who now in 1969 find it necessary to turn their backs on them?

What is lacking in the West are the psychological, the spiritual, the moral convictions that are part of being a great power, not the material factors. We react

to what the Russians do, we do not originate the policies that in the past have stirred men's spirits. A Prussian general once said his answer to "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," was "Calvalry, Infantry, Artillery," but it was not a durable answer; the West has still not found a satisfying answer to the problems arising out of the technological society and its abundance. When the youth of our time are alienated, this is not the result of a conspiracy, although the conspiracy makes all the use it can of their revolt and strives to turn it into the desired channels. But the United States has a far better case than the one we tell the world or that we tell ourselves about. It is we who keep the doors open for all the dissident writers and thinkers, geniuses and crackpots, who are sent not to Siberia, but to the lecture circuit; it is we who pour out our substance on behalf of such principles as independence and self-determination, and then lament the fact that the results are in no proportion to our expectations or the expectations of those for whom we were making the sacrifices. It is necessary to conserve even such enormous material energies as we can generate, and it is necessary to hold and harden our lines. American interests may be clearly defined; it is for those interests that we need fortitude and determination, and it is possible that if we are able to forge a foreign policy that conforms to the genuine needs of this country—which are also the needs of that other part of the great world of traditional culture in East and West—the disillusioned ones who lost track of themselves after the fruitless search for worldwide four freedoms may return to the ranks of civilization.

E.D.

The above editorial is condensed from a talk given in Washington in February 1969 to an audience of military and civil officers.