

'containing communism':

The Art of Getting Along

Raymond Welch

In recent years much attention has been devoted to a systematic re-evaluation of the conventional wisdom regarding the sources and impact of American foreign policy. Much of the revisionist scholarship has focused on the Cold War, arguing (in its most radical form) that the conventional anti-communist rhetoric of the '50s and '60s was merely a rationalization for an aggressive anti-Soviet policy. Scholars of this persuasion place most of the blame for the Cold War on the U.S. government. Such views are untenable to many conservative scholars, who point to the general weakness and ineffectuality of American Cold War policies, compared to the rhetoric with which they were justified.

Professor Welch has taken an altogether different approach. He has examined the Cold War "containment" period empirically, looking past the rhetoric of anti-communism to determine what sort of considerations really seemed to determine American foreign policy. His conclusions are novel, thought-provoking, and unsettling to those who value such concepts as justice and freedom.

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The notion that good technique means good policy dies hard. Especially so in discussions of recent American policies of state. We are told, for example, that to correct the disasters of the past, a reformed decision-making must force our leaders to be humane and honest. But in fact, there have been few lies told in this matter of state policy, and if the emperor's nakedness has gone unnamed, it is not because *he* misled us.

Twenty-six years ago, President Harry Truman addressed a joint session of Congress, requesting an expanded program of economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey. In making this request, Truman emphasized America's responsibility toward the so-called free nations of the world: it is America's job, **january 1974**

he asserted, to strengthen such nations that they might resist internal or external subversion; and when potential subversion becomes an actuality, America's task is to help preserve the status quo. "One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States," he stated,

is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. . . . We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free people to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed upon free people, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.

Congress responded within several months by substantially accepting the President's request, thereby implementing what is referred to as the Truman Doctrine.

Although Truman had not once referred by name to communism or the Soviet Union, all who listened to him believed they understood his full meaning. Congressmen, journalists, university professors, diplomats—all understood that the U.S. President was announcing America's intent to contain the spread of communism. Since that announcement, on March 12, 1947, American leaders have reiterated that intent, and during the ensuing quarter-century observers have taken this so-called policy of containment to be the basic American foreign policy.

In this article, I would like to treat the varying fortunes of the containment policy since World War II. I believe that if this official U.S. policy is taken seriously at full value, we will discover there the basic statist criterion by which the U.S. has

consistently evaluated other nations.

To discover the basic meaning of containment, we can look at three matters: first, the manner in which American political leaders perceived and evaluated the immediate post-World War II world; next, the articulation of the containment policy itself; and third, America's alliance with the Republic of South Vietnam.

THE LONELY GIANT

It is a commonplace assertion by now that the U.S. emerged from World War II indisputably the richest and most powerful nation in the world. In returning to the public and private documents of that period, therefore, I was struck by the fact that powerful American leaders did not express the outgoing assurance we might expect in that situation. Instead, the dominant attitude was one of disorientation and fear. The world into which these gentlemen were born was perceived to be gone, its structure and contours torn down by the catastrophe of 20th Century wars. The United States, they sensed, confronted a world of unknown, fearful potential.

George Kennan, then recent American charge d'affaires in Moscow, presented a series of lectures at the Naval War College in 1946-47. In his final lecture, before joining the State Department in Washington, he summed up America's situation in these words:

We have won a war in Europe—on the battlefield. It has cost us not only the lives of our people, the labor of our people, the depletion of our national resources. It has also cost us the stability of our international environment, and above all the vigor and strength—temporarily—of some of our real and natural allies. . . . Today we Americans stand as a lonely, threatened power on the field of world history. [1]

Kennan enjoined his students, America's future policy and decision-makers, to anticipate "... a world which is at worst hostile and at best resentful."

Joseph Jones, diplomatic officer in the Office of Public Affairs and a major participant in post-War planning, wrote that the major problem was the economic crisis in Britain and her Empire, in France, Greece and China. Should these nations fall into economic anarchy, he continued, "... at best they will drop out of the U.S. orbit and try an independent nationalistic policy; at most they will swing into the Russian orbit. We will then face the world alone." [2]

Powerful Congressmen worried over America's troubled predicament. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, the 80th Session's Republican majority leader, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and leader in the struggle for bipartisan support for the containment policy, conveyed his frustration to the Senate. "In a sense we are a tragic generation, despite our blessings and our place in the sun," he said:

We have been drawn into two World Wars. We finally won them both, and yet still confront a restless and precarious peace. Something has been wrong. [3]

Dean Acheson, powerful under-Secretary and Secretary of State for Truman, summed up the disorientation experienced by those leaders:

The period . . . 1941 through 1952—was one of great obscurity to those who lived through it. Not only was the future clouded, a common enough situation, but the present was equally clouded. We all had far more than the familiar difficulty of determining the capabilities and intentions of those who inhabit this planet with us. The significance of events was shrouded in ambiguity. We groped after interpretations of them, sometimes reversed lines of action based on earlier views, and hesitated long before grasping what now seems obvious. [4]

To have lost one's natural allies was a grim reality, but I suspect that even more than that loss, there was a particular form of international hostility toward American leaders which more fully accounts for the disorientation Acheson described. All diplomatic consultations with the Soviet Union after the War involved a belligerence, intransigence and abuse with which American negotiators had no previous experience whatsoever. Beginning particularly with Stalin's February 2, 1946 speech, in which the Soviet leader reiterated the traditional Marxian-Leninist interpretation of capitalism's inevitable aggressiveness, and continuing through the years afterward in dramatic public utterances and private ones as well, the Soviets incessantly violated the traditional diplomatic rules of the game, among which is the elementary understanding that diplomats conduct themselves and treat their opposites with civility and courtesy. American diplomats consistently stressed their inability to get to first base, or even to see the pitch.

Secretary of Navy and Defense James Forrestal was especially intrigued with Soviet truculence, and we find discussed in his *DIARIES* numerous confrontations in which his colleagues were exasperated and offended by a plain lack of civility. At the several Conferences of Foreign Ministers held during these years, the Soviet Union's Molotov pained the Americans (and their Allies) to an extreme, eliciting from Secretary of State George Marshall at one of them the statement that, as expressed by Forrestal:

... the conduct of the Russian foreign minister and his remarks were of such a character as to make it impossible for him or his colleagues to have any respect for the Soviet Union.

Forrestal also mentioned attempted negotiations with the Soviets during the Berlin crisis of 1948: "The
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sheer duplicity of the Soviets during these negotiations is beyond the experience of the experts in the State Department.”[5]

The instances of Russian diplomatic aggression were many, and after several years they were sometimes matched by a growing American truculence, particularly with the advent of John Foster Dulles in 1953. And while much of the surface of this diplomatic conflict made the glare of headlines, naturally the full experience of it could only be appreciated by those few persons participating in what often became emotional confrontations, and by their colleagues who stood at one remove from the conference table but who were charged with making some kind of sense of these aberrations.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOVIETS

Immediately following Stalin’s militant speech of February 1946, a series of cables and reports from the American charge d’affaires in Moscow, George F. Kennan, was received in Washington. Forrestal, then Secretary of the Navy, was deeply impressed by the possibility that international hostility could be anticipated, a possibility that Kennan’s reports made feasible.[6]

Kennan was brought home during 1946 and assigned as a lecturer at the Naval War College, and during this time, Forrestal prompted him to write out his thoughts on the subject of dealing with the Soviets. The resulting essay made a significant impact on the Truman administration, so significant in fact that in the Spring of 1947 Kennan was named Chief of the newly created Policy Planning Staff in the State Department, a research and advisory council charged with the task of providing long range policy alternatives.

In attempting to explain Soviet conduct, Kennan in effect was disclosing for American leaders the method to the Soviet madness, thereby alleviating their disorientation and ambiguity. His 1946 essay, published pseudonymously in 1947 under the title “Sources of Soviet Conduct,” plus at least one other major essay, “America and the Russian Future,” (1951) constitute the basic planning statements of the official United States policy of containment. Seen as an attempt to make sense out of the post-War world, Kennan’s work represents a major chapter in modern American intellectual history.

“Sources of Soviet Conduct” is an analysis of the “political personality of Soviet Power.” Kennan described that personality as a product of the interaction between a consistently-held communist ideology and the historical circumstances in good part fashioned by that ideology. Understanding this interaction, he implied, will allow the United States to chart its international actions more fruitfully by anticipating Soviet conduct.

The most important Soviet belief, Kennan asserted, is that capitalism “. . . contains the seeds of its own destruction,” a destruction which will necessitate war between capitalist and socialist states.

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Although inevitable, capitalism’s destruction must be coaxed; it will be consistently tending in that direction until the proletarian revolutionaries of the world provide the explosive catalyst. Since, according to Marxism, it is in the nature of things that capitalism destroy itself, the Soviet Union feels no haste; their foreign policy, Kennan asserted, can be oriented toward a slow building of pressure, a full willingness to make tactical retreats where necessary, and to lie low: always, though, in persistent sight of the final goal.

Soviet diplomatic truculence, so bothersome to U.S. leaders, is the product of this world view, Kennan continued. The Kremlin’s sense of infallibility about the inevitable outcome of history gives them an air of belligerence, as if all others were merely unknowing puppets dancing to the forces of history. Kennan, therefore, took special note of the Soviet’s lack of “Anglo-Saxon traditions of compromise,” their “. . . practices of iron discipline and obedience and not . . . the arts of compromise and accommodation.”

Aware of the Soviet’s belief that capitalism will destroy itself, and interpreting their belligerence and aggressiveness in that context, Kennan went on to state briefly, in an oft-quoted summary of the containment policy, his recommendation for United States policy in the present circumstances: “. . . Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western Worlds,” he said, “is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy. . . .”[7] This was to be a diplomatic policy, he implied here but made more explicit in later works, meant to “tide us over” until political change within the Soviet Union would allow us to “. . . discuss effectively with the Russians. . . .”[8]

The 1951 essay, “America and the Russian Future,” is a thematic continuation of the earlier essay. Kennan asked two related questions here: What is it America should *not* expect of the Soviet Union? and What is it America *may* expect? In reviewing his answers, we move a major step closer to a full understanding of the criterion which animates American policy.

Briefly stated, first: we should not expect to see a capitalistic society as we know it develop in the Soviet Union. Second, we cannot expect the

development of a "... liberal democratic Russia along American patterns." Without being specific, Kennan advised Americans to be tolerant of whatever form of government evolves there provided that "... it keeps within certain well-defined limits, beyond which lies totalitarianism." And, in any case, the entire political-social-economic system within the U.S.S.R. is *not* our concern at all, and the U.S. should not base its actions on such matters.

These rather conventional assertions were hardly original with Kennan. Much more revealing are his projections of what we *may* expect. First, we may look for a Russian government which "would be tolerant, communicative and forthright *in its relations with other states and peoples*." (my emphasis) At this point, he alluded to the desirability of certain temperamental qualities: e.g., "... an atmosphere of emotional sanity and moderation," and his context makes clear that he was talking about diplomacy, and not about physical aggression. In desiring the Soviet Union to be "tolerant, communicative and forthright," Kennan had in mind, in this context, one major benefit: making the job of the diplomat more congenial.

Second in a revealing reiteration of an earlier assertion, Kennan stated that we must accept whatever form of government evolves in the Soviet Union, but we may expect that it will "... stop short of that fairly plain line beyond which lies totalitarianism." One reason totalitarianism is unacceptable, he said, is a "less than solid reason," namely, that we experience shock "... at witnessing the sickening details of this type of oppression." But "a reason even more solid," is that to carry out totalitarian oppression requires a political apparatus of coercion which isolates that nation from others; to secure its power at home, furthermore, that nation must portray the rest of the world to its citizens as predators seeking to destroy them. Thus, totalitarianism is most rightfully objectionable because it poisons international relations. "The world," Kennan stated,

is not only heartily sick of this comedy [of totalitarianism] by reason of the endless and wearisome falsehoods it involves, but it has learned to recognize it as something so irresponsible and dangerous that, maintained for any length of time, it easily becomes a major hazard for world peace and stability. It is for this reason that we, while recognizing that all distinctions as between freedom and authority are relative and admitting that 90 per cent of them are no business of ours when they affect a foreign country, still insist that there is an area here in which no government of a great country can move without creating the most grievous and weighty problems for its neighbors.[9]

And so we arrive at the surprisingly simple conclusion that the basic factor in diplomatic relations is the art of diplomacy itself. In the context I have given,

Kennan's point is very clear: the U.S. does not uphold an ideology of freedom, but urges at least minimal freedom for other people—shall we say 10%—so that national governments will remain congenial to the diplomatic arts of mutual compromise and accommodation, which is the basic need in international relations. Kennan tells us, in effect, that post-war intransigent Russia may yet become as compromising and accommodating as the United States.

ENTER DIEM

During the years of the late 1940's and the early 1950's, when American policy leaders were getting their own perspective on the world, crucial but often unpublicized events occurred which, by a logic I hope to capture, have since culminated in America's active and disastrous championship of the Republic of South Vietnam. In order to see that alliance in the context of America diplomatic judgment and planning, it will be helpful to ascertain the nature of the South Vietnamese regime as it was molded by Ngo Dinh Diem from 1954 to 1963, then briefly the diplomatic character of Diem's regime, and finally, the factor which possibly explains America's assessment of that nation.

In 1954, during the French withdrawal from Indochina, the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai invited his former Minister of the Interior, Ngo Dinh Diem, to assume the premiership of the Republic of Vietnam, since 1950 a rival to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam headed by Ho Chi Minh. Bao Dai, now after the French defeat, offered Diem absolute powers, and on June 19, 1954, Diem accepted the position. The following year Diem, through his family and other connections in the city of Hue, managed to have Bao Dai deposed, and in a follow-up plebiscite, the corruption of which, in one writer's words, would put Ho Chi Minh to shame, Diem received 98.2% of the vote, many voting districts around Saigon reporting more votes than registered voters!

In 1956, a constituent assembly accepted a Diem-written constitution. This Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam provided for a strong central government, modelled on a medley of English, French and American constitutional provisions. It provided for a strong president, with particularly wide powers over the budget. One final clause, Article 98, however, was probably unique in constitutional history: Article 98 suspended the whole Constitution from Article 97 on back, for the duration of the first legislative term, i.e., until 1961. In *that* year, the National Assembly, by that time wholly under Diem's authority, declared a state of emergency, voted Diem a continuation of plenary powers, and renewed those powers in subsequent years. During this period, from 1954 until his assassination in 1963, Diem, assisted by his powerful brothers, relatives, and associates, governed South Vietnam with full autocratic power, and by the late 1950's, "... long before Communist

guerrilla warfare gave them a semblance of justification. . . ." these leaders, with Diem at the apex of power, had achieved a dictatorship more than comparable in its repressiveness to the Hanoi regime, although reputedly much less efficient. [10]

Diem and his older brother Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc, together with the younger brother Ngo Dinh Nhu and his redoubtable wife, fostered the philosophy of "personalism," a highly ambiguous doctrine of Catholic feudalism which Diem had learned from French religious writers during his years in Paris, and which upheld the feudal ideal of a society of stability and rigid status.

To achieve a better Vietnam, by this definition, Diem promulgated numerous decrees throughout his years of power. He decreed rigid controls on all forms of communication; concentration camps were established; commerce was severely restricted; industrialism was actively discouraged—despite American unhappiness about it—and when it was allowed, the government demanded full control through majority stock interest. In 1962, he decreed that all forms of assembly, even special family gatherings, were required to have police authorization, the lines of power going directly to brother Nhu and Diem. At the same time, he created the so-called "front line Military Tribunals," empowered to make judicial decisions throughout the countryside, without appeal except to the President himself. The court system was weakened by fearful judges, appointed and dismissed by Diem, although many cases never got beyond the military tribunals.

The bizarre nature of Diem's "personalist" ideal, the dictatorial capacity of his regime, and the political, moral and intellectual bankruptcy which resulted were painfully brought to a focus in the so-called Law for the Protection of Morality, promoted by Mme. Nhu from 1958 until its passage in 1962. On many occasions in the early 1960's, guerrillas battled in the outskirts of Saigon while the National Assembly was kept busy debating such issues as dancing, sentimental songs, padded bras and prostitution.

These were the tragic-ludicrous realities of a nation about which at least three American presidents and countless others around the world had spoken in the glowing rhetoric of freedom, democratic process and enlightened national self-determination. Journalist-historian Bernard Fall, before dying in that nation, wrote that Diem had adopted "... methods in every field of endeavor which tended to blur the differences between its brand of totalitarianism and that of the Communist North. The 17th Parallel," he concluded, "... separates two systems practicing virtually the same rituals, but invoking different deities." [11]

DIPLOMACY PAYS

Given Diem's anti-capitalist feudalism, resulting in a dictatorship hardly distinguishable from that of Communist North Vietnam, what accounts
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for American support of his regime? I believe the basic reason lies in the fact that over a number of years, Diem had shown himself to be a master of the diplomatic arts. Further, he had shown an ability to overcome domestic crises, and most importantly to the U.S., the ability to prevent such crises from unsettling international relations. While often volatile and obstinate with American leaders, he had established himself as a man at least open to compromise and accommodation; in other words, contrary to the usual view, it was possible to get to first base with Diem. [12]

He had begun that feat as early as 1950. In August of that year, he and Thuc travelled to Rome for Church celebrations. Following that, in September and October, Diem visited the U.S., meeting with a small group of influential men, among them Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York and official Catholic Chaplain of the U.S. Military Services. Diem spoke fervently to these men of the need to end French colonial rule, to establish a new nationalist government, and the defeat of the Viet-minh insurgency forces.

After a brief trip to Europe, Diem returned to the U.S. in 1951 and spent two years at the Maryknoll Seminaries at Lakewood, New Jersey and Ossining, New York; he lectured at eastern and mid-western universities. During this time, according to a 1955 article in *TIME*, Cardinal Spellman led Diem on "... trip after trip to Washington to harangue Congressmen and government officials in the cause of Vietnamese independence," and among his "sympathetic" listeners were Senators Mike Mansfield and John F. Kennedy, Representative Walter Judd, and Justice William O. Douglas. [13]

The lasting impact of these personal negotiations helps explain American willingness to work with Diem. The full details of that impact will not be known for many years, but we do have clues. For example, in 1954, when news coverage of Diem's use of millions of U.S. dollars to buy support from religious sect leaders caused controversy in Washington, a "sympathetic" Senator Mansfield on October 15 submitted a sharply-worded report to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee objecting to any over-

throw of Diem, saying that if that event occurred, the U.S. should suspend all but humanitarian aid to Vietnam. Then on the 23rd of October and on January 1st, 1955, President Eisenhower in public letters to Diem affirmed and reaffirmed the policy of direct American aid to his government.

On a wider international scale, Diem directed South Vietnam's diplomatic relations in a manner that brought recognition and cooperation from countless nations of every continent of the world; Diem was always at least approachable. South Vietnam won acceptance among countries of the Afro-Asian bloc, as well as the Western nations; it participated in every conceivable international organization and conference. Added to these formal actions were the personal contacts made by Diem's associates; for example, the fiery but personable Mme. Nhu could wield an intriguing charm in personal diplomacy all out of keeping with her nickname "Dragon Lady." Her visits to the U.S. and Mexico in 1962 and 1963 attest to her powers of friendly persuasion.[14]

Diem himself was unsurpassed in these efforts. The success of his 1957 visit to the U.S. resulted from his ability to cultivate established contacts and to show himself still very much the accommodating ally. According to Chester Cooper,

His speech to a joint session of Congress was enthusiastically received, and the press generally was favorable. His remarks on Capital Hill had just the right mix of humility, gratitude, and determination and were shrewdly designed to fit the current mood of Congress. Diem thanked the United States for its "generous and unselfish assistance" and he pledged to "continue to fight Communism." He was described by the *NEW YORK TIMES* as an "Asian liberator, a man of tenacity of purpose, a stubborn man . . . bent on succeeding, a man whose life—all of it—is devoted to his country and to his God." [15]

JUDGING HO

Briefly, in contrast to Diem's diplomatic arts, Ho Chi Minh's regime cultivated few international ties, before or after the exit of France from Indochina. His relations even with so-called noncommitted and third world nations were distant. Indeed, in matters such as foreign representation in the social and economic life of North Vietnam, international participation, and tourism, Ho Chi Minh went beyond simple aloofness by making evident his deep suspicions of the outside world. North Vietnam, Fall wrote, "... chose to surround itself with a wall of aggressive suspicion. . . . The world, as seen from Hanoi, must be full of menace. . . ." [16]

It is true, as recent writers stress, that Ho conducted himself with considerable tact on various occasions, e.g., in 1946 during the initial post-War negotiations with France. However, such conduct ultimately failed to persuade American planners. Why so?

18 reason

At that time, particularly in late 1946, the U.S. was confronted with what appeared to be a resurgent French colonialism in Indochina and simultaneously the maturing of an articulate native nationalism. So we find in the State Department Indochina documents for 1946 item after item reflecting American probing into the nature of Ho and his Vietnam regime, particularly with regard to the matter of communism. The import of these documents is that the U.S. felt itself approaching a necessary choice between French colonial maneuvering, which even included the tendency to "... picture US as aggressive and imperialistic," and a native movement which Americans for the moment perceived as a confusing blend of nationalism and international communism.

The mute desperation experienced over this dilemma can be seen in the search even for *shreds* of evidence with which to judge Ho; for example, Acting Secretary of State Acheson sought from Consul Reed in Saigon the official explanation given for Viet Nam's flag, a gold star on a red field: "The official Vietnam explanation of the Vietnam flag would be especially interesting in view of Ho Chi Minh's denial of Communist orientation on the part of his government." [17]

The emphasis on Ho's communism was entirely characteristic of the American evaluation throughout that period. Acheson, in December 1946, telegraphed a deputy who was about to confer with Ho, to

Keep in mind Ho's clear record as agent international communism, absence evidence recantation Moscow affiliations, confused political situation France and support Ho receiving French Communist Party. Least desirable eventuality would be establishment Communist-dominated, Moscow-oriented state Indochina in view Dept., which most interested info strength non-communist elements Vietnam. [18]

So, by the end of 1946 at least, the United States exercised a set of attitudes and precautions based on the pivotal consideration of the international consequences of national communism. Three years later, when the Soviet Union recognized Ho's regime, Acheson reportedly commented dramatically that Moscow's recognition "... should remove any illusions as to the 'nationalist' nature of Ho Chi Minh's aims and reveals Ho in his true colors, as the mortal enemy of native independence." [19] The tone of that comment reflected the binding force of the American conception that as communism becomes embodied in political realities, the international consequences are predictable and disastrous.

CONTAINMENT

To conclude: I think we see at work, in America's alliance with South Vietnam, the factor which for American leaders makes the world an understandable place. The experience of dealing with

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Diem and his associates "conformed" to the guidelines set out by Kennan and others in the policy of containment. Having left behind the disorientation and fears of the immediate post-War years, American leaders placed highest premium upon diplomatic openness to compromise and accommodation. Containment, then, meant exactly what Kennan said it meant, in the context in which he said it. Containment of communism did not basically refer to communist military expansion: no American leader seriously believed the Soviet Union would risk war with the United States, a risk which was discounted in two top-secret State Department reports in the 1940's.[20] Containment of communism was not even a commitment to oppose the ideology of communism per se, but only insofar as the expansion of it encouraged the spread of a hostile and aggressive attitude among the world's nations. As Kennan had said, the U.S. is concerned with that ideology, or any dictatorship, to the extent that it may poison international relations.

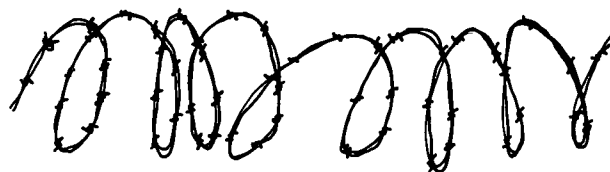
As a statement of foreign policy, therefore, the containment doctrine announced the American intention to oppose any expansion of diplomatic aggression. America's basic interest has been that other nations be "underspoken" enough, tractable enough, that the U.S. may confront them for compromise and accommodation over more specific issues.[21]

This basic interest has been a traditional goal of great powers, but the containment policy and its earliest official expression, the Truman Doctrine, went beyond by announcing the U.S. intention to intervene by various means at the source of the problem—the domestic systems of nations around the world. Although outside the scope of this article, the uniqueness of this policy is probably more than merely a quantitative step-up in interventionism.[22] As we saw in Kennan, it based our security interest on the delicate ideological-diplomatic link between a nation's structure and its international conduct. The containment theory anticipated that the main if not exclusive source of international conflict would be the communist ideology as it became embodied in political form. So, in the attempt to locate potential threats to the international status quo, decision-makers focused on ideological affiliations as short-hand criteria for anticipating future developments. Of course the containment theory offered no radical or noncontradictory alternative to communism, because to do so, e.g., by encouraging a radically libertarian society, would be to repudiate the existing statist power structure in the United States.

In studying the subject, if this ideological-diplomatic context is ignored, one is left with symptoms of a mystifying American urge to world dominance. And this is the gross error of those who have argued, and approvingly, that the post-War world marked an "end of ideology" and must be understood in that framework. On the contrary, the key to recent policies of state is that American

leaders have pursued a traditional statist ideology, and that all other judgments and actions occurred in light of that consideration.

From that standpoint, the emperor's problem was not his nakedness, but rather to bring up an unruly neighboring prince to join in the game. □



NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] Kennan, *MEMOIRS, 1925-1950* (Boston 1967), pp. 350-51.
- [2] Letter to William Benton, quoted by Berger, "A Conservative Critique of Containment," in David Horowitz, ed., *CONTAINMENT AND REVOLUTION* (Boston 1967), pp. 126-27.
- [3] Vandenberg, *PRIVATE PAPERS* (Boston 1952), p. 348.
- [4] Acheson, *PRESENT AT THE CREATION* (New York 1969), pp. 3-4.
- [5] Forrestal, *DIARIES* (New York 1951), p. 354 and 482.
- [6] Kennan recalled that the affect of his longest cable "... was nothing less than sensational." His further comments are instructive: "It was one of those moments when official Washington ... was ready to receive a given message. ... All this only goes to show that more important than the observable nature of external reality, when it comes to the determination of Washington's view of the world, is the subjective state of readiness on the part of Washington officialdom to recognize this or that feature of it," *MEMOIRS*, pp. 294-95.
- [7] Kennan, *AMERICAN DIPLOMACY* (New York, Mentor Book), p. 99.
- [8] *MEMOIRS*, p. 365.
- [9] *AMERICAN DIPLOMACY*, pp. 114-15.
- [10] Bernard B. Fall, *THE TWO VIETNAMS* (New York 1963), p. 270.
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 386, 388.
- [12] See Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow's cablegram to Secretary of State Herter, September 16, 1960, Document #16, *THE PENTAGON PAPERS* (New York 1971), p. 116. That Diem's inability or unwillingness to continue such maneuvering paved the way for U.S. involvement in his overthrow is clearly shown in, e.g., State Department cablegram to Ambassador Lodge, August 24, 1963, Document #35, p. 194.
- [13] Fall, *TWO VIET-NAMS*, pp. 242-43; Joseph Buttinger, *VIETNAM* (New York 1968), p. 385.
- [14] Fall, *TWO VIET-NAMS*, pp. 388-89.
- [15] Cooper, *THE LAST CRUSADE* (New York 1970), p. 153.
- [16] Fall, *TWO VIET-NAMS*, pp. 384-85.
- [17] U.S. Dept. of State, *FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES*, 1946, v. 8, pp. 57-58. Acheson to Reed, October 9, 1946, p. 61. American probing, pp. 61ff.
- [18] *Ibid.*, December 5, 1946, pp. 67-69.
- [19] *NEWSWEEK*, February 13, 1950, p. 24.
- [20] See Forrestal, *DIARIES*, p. 409, 508; and Vandenberg, *PAPERS*, p. 286, pp. 346-50.
- [21] I think that the federal government's relations with major nongovernmental leaders and organizations in domestic affairs throughout this century have been animated by the same basic interest. In that sense, America's recent and highly publicized international actions are a symptom of older and less publicized realities at home.
- [22] See Robert W. Tucker, *THE RADICAL LEFT AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY* (Baltimore 1971), p. 107.

CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT

The amazing thing about the continuously unfolding saga of corruption in Washington is not that it *exists*; surely the readers of this magazine are not surprised that these things are taking place in our increasingly fascistic mixed economy. Rather, it is the sustained attention and interest focused on these matters by a courageous press and an outraged public that is surprising—and heartening. To be sure, people have always been skeptical of politicians, and the press has undoubtedly known more than they have told, over the past decades. But people have been curiously reticent to talk about these things, to admit the extent to which corruption was a way of life in government—until now.

Although the current disillusionment with government is a very healthy thing, there is a real danger that the most important lesson of the current scandals will be missed. For there is a common thread running through all the incidents, one that the press has not hidden, but has failed to identify and focus on. Let's look at a few examples:

The Milk Deal: In 1971 the Associated Milk Producers offered the Administration \$2 million in campaign help in exchange for import quotas against foreign dairy products. In 1972, they contributed \$400,000 in exchange for a 10% increase in federal milk price supports. Since the increased subsidy netted \$500-700 million in additional revenues, the milk producers got back 1500 times what they paid. That kind of leverage is hard to beat.

The Agnew Affair: Our former vice-president received regular payoffs from road and building contractors in exchange for favorable treatment in bidding on government contracts. A Maryland bank received the State's lucrative bond business only after coming through with "contributions" to Agnew.

The Gurney Booster Fund: Building contractors in Florida paid into a secret bank account in order to obtain influence in getting FHA contracts. One builder has told a Miami grand jury that he was promised influence through Gurney's office if he would pay \$500 per house for

each FHA-subsidized housing contract.

Rebozo's Bank: The Nixon Administration twice reversed the strong recommendations of two federal bank examiners that a group of businessmen be permitted to open a bank on Key Biscayne in competition with the island's sole existing bank, headed by Nixon pal Bebe Rebozo. Just one month after the Treasury Department ruled that the businessmen had shown only a "marginal banking need," the Federal Home Loan Bank Board granted two directors of Rebozo's bank a charter for a new savings and loan institution on Key Biscayne. The Board justified the S&L using *the same economic figures* that Rebozo had provided the Treasury Department to show that there was insufficient demand for loans to warrant a second bank on the island. Approval of the S&L had been turned down twice before, and was finally granted only after a Nixon appointee was named to head the Board.

The Hughes Caper: Howard Hughes contributed \$50,000 in cash to Nixon (via Rebozo) in 1969, and another \$50,000 in 1970. In 1969 the CAB decided to allow Hughes to purchase ailing Air West, and in 1970 the Justice Department dropped its antitrust opposition to Hughes' acquisition of additional Las Vegas casinos.

In each of these cases, the common element is that of businessmen influencing government officials to grant them economic favors, either in preference to other businessmen, or at the expense of consumers. The businessmen pay the government to be exempted from the forces of the marketplace (or, as in the case of Hughes, from arbitrary, unjust government regulations). The fact that, in many cases, the money is given in the form of "campaign contributions" is completely beside the point. Those who advocate cleaning up corruption by "reforming" campaign financing are either hopelessly naive, or are as uninterested in stopping corruption as the politicians themselves.

It is only the existence of massive government interference in the economic life of

the country that makes it possible for government officials to grant economic favors. Study after study has shown the economic inefficiencies of government regulation and intervention, and the harm caused to consumers and to innovative, competitive businessmen. The free marketplace can do a far better job of providing goods and services, *and politicians know this*. They also know that the only way they can continue to remain in the position of granting economic favors to those who will pay is to make people think that the free market *can't* handle things and would produce chaos, when in fact the exact opposite is true. In the cases cited above:

- Why shouldn't milk producers price their product in the marketplace like all other food producers?
- Why can't the money now spent on government housing and highway programs be left in the capital market, to finance entrepreneurs who can build economically-justified roads and housing?
- Why can't banks be left free to compete like shoe stores and supermarkets, with branches wherever they can make a go of it, and innovative, competitive services?
- Why can't we repeal the antitrust laws, which penalize efficiency and competence, and retard U.S. companies in international trade?
- Why can't the CAB be abolished, to let the airlines compete on price and service, instead of on trivialities like steak and movies?

It is the existence of laws and regulations like these that gives politicians their license to peddle influence. We shall have corruption as long as these powers remain in the politicians' hands.

At the height of the McCarthy era, outspoken individualist Frank Chodorov commented that the way to get rid of communists in government jobs is to eliminate the government jobs. His point is well taken. The way to eliminate corruption in the government's economic functions is to eliminate those government functions.

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