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UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY--WESTERN EUROPE

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on 24 March 1954

by
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UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY -- WESTERN EUROPE

While my subject has to do with Western Europe -- which I am sure you will agree is a broad subject in itself -- I must necessarily dwell to some extent on the eastern part of the continent, which is a ^{primary} source of concern to all of us today. Western Europe is of course highly important to us but its importance is increased many-fold by virtue of its proximity to the only serious threat to our freedom and survival -- the Soviet empire. The heart of Soviet power is found in eastern Europe. When we add the Asiatic regions to the communist domain the result is the largest and most populous empire that has ever existed. It has enormous economic and military capabilities and a manifest intention -- through the employment of these capabilities -- to achieve world domination.

The time -- and my subject -- do not permit me to engage in a comprehensive discussion of the problems we face in our relations with Soviet Russia. You are all well aware that the central purpose of our foreign policy today is to protect this nation and -- as a corollary -- the other nations of the free world from domination or destruction by the Communists, and almost every policy and program which we have undertaken is designed to serve this purpose.

With respect to our direct relations with Russia, we have three essential aims. We want to avoid the catastrophe of atomic war, if at all possible. We want to limit the growth of Soviet capabilities for injury to the United States and other free nations, and gradually reduce these capabilities. Finally, we hope eventually to achieve a practical universal security arrangement

arrangement within which we can have peaceful and friendly cooperation with the peoples now under Soviet control, including Russia itself. Needless to say, this last objective will require internal political and psychological changes within the Communist world so profound and far-reaching that they cannot be anticipated in the foreseeable future.

The aims I have mentioned cannot be pursued very far through direct relations with Russia. There must be two sides to agreement as well as to arguments. And the present Communist leadership -- as demonstrated most recently by the Four Power Conference at Berlin -- is not in the least inclined to trade its dreams of world empire for a system of mutual security and cooperation. Our principal opportunity to influence Russian policy and the future structure of the society now behind the iron curtain is found in our relations with the part of the world that is still free. We are convinced that the strength of the free world is our best insurance against war. The strength of the free world also provides one of our best means of attracting nations now under Soviet domination away from the Soviet orbit. Finally, it is only by building sufficient strength to check and reverse the tide of Communist expansion that we can reasonably hope for the future decay of Communist power within the Soviet orbit itself.

While our direct relations with the Soviet area are important, we must recognize that the decisive struggle of the cold war is now focused on areas and nations not yet under Communist domination. Of these areas, free Europe is one of the most important. This area is the main subject of my discussion today.

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The central problem of the United States in defining its European policies is to make an objective, up-to-date estimate of the importance of free Europe to our own security. There have been many bitter public controversies in this country concerning particular measures which the United States Government has taken in connection with Europe. Issues under dispute have included the vast economic aid program known as the Marshall Plan, our commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty, our large-scale military assistance programs, and our assignment of American forces to the European theatre.

A large part of this controversy would probably have been avoided if our political and military experts, and the American people as a whole, were in substantial agreement as to what Europe is actually worth to us. ~~To a considerable extent, differences in attitude toward particular policies reflect divergent appraisals of Europe's value.~~

Fifty years ago, Western Europe was clearly the great center of world power. Most of the world's people and territory were under the control or influence of France, Germany, Italy, Great Britain and other European powers. Control of all Europe would almost certainly have meant something approaching world domination. In recognition of this fact, the United States fought two major wars to prevent the organization of Europe under a single, hostile power.

Largely as a product of these wars, free Europe has declined from its metropolitan position as the center of world power to the status of a major prize in the rivalries between two other power centers, one located in North America and the other projecting itself into the heart of Europe from the East. Europe's overseas
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empires have been whittled away and a large part of its capital investments in other parts of the world has been lost or dissipated. The growth of its population has not kept pace with that of other parts of the world. In brief, free Europe just isn't what it used to be -- which raises the question of its continued importance to American security.

This question becomes even more acute when we consider the weapons and techniques of modern warfare. If we could assume the conditions of warfare which prevailed in World War II, there would be no doubt that free Europe is absolutely essential to American survival. But in the atomic age, it is less certain that control of Europe would be decisive in an all-out war. The large land armies which Europe is capable of contributing to the common defense might prove of little value, and even Europe's great industrial resources might be neutralized in the early stages of a conflict.

Despite these uncertainties, the foreign policies and the military programs of this country are still founded upon the premise that the status of free Europe is of vital importance to us, and that this importance will continue for the foreseeable future. We are convinced that the strength of free Europe will be a powerful factor in deterring Soviet aggression. We believe that Europe can still make an extremely valuable contribution in the event of a "hot war". Finally, we are convinced that free Europe can play a decisive role in a prolonged "cold war".

It is very difficult to foresee what strategic circumstances may prevail in the event of an all-out war within the next ten or fifteen years, particularly with respect to the efficacy of conventional weapons and techniques. However, I think it is clear that we are not yet in a position to discount the value in that

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struggle of 300 million skilled human beings. Even with massive retaliation as our chief weapon, I believe we must assume that the 96 ground divisions now organized under NATO would have the capacity to inflict considerable damage on an enemy. ~~In view of the special difficulties of vast amphibious operations under conditions of modern warfare, there might also be enormous value in retaining footholds on the European continent as springboards for the eventual invasion and occupation of Russia.~~

Even if ground warfare should play a minor part in such a war, our air and naval bases in Europe would have immense value. We would want to retain and use these bases as long as possible. Without them our capacity for massive retaliation against the heart of Soviet power would be drastically reduced.

The value of European industrial power after an all-out war began is an imponderable. The principal centers of production might rapidly be bombed out of existence. On the other hand, the same is true of American and Soviet centers of production. If a third world war should continue for a long period of time, control of the remnants of European production might prove to be a highly important factor in the outcome.

Nor can we totally ignore the possibility of an "atomic stalemate" -- a situation in which both the United States and the Soviet Union, because of muted fear, might tacitly consent to refrain from using weapons of mass destruction. If this situation developed, the strength of the conventional military forces available in Europe at the outbreak of war might well determine the final result.

In brief, we cannot easily evaluate the positive contribution which free Europe might be able to make in case of sudden war. But it is evident that this contribution would probably be substantial and perhaps decisive.

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These same considerations apply to Europe's value in detering aggression. It is quite possible that the Soviet Union might be willing to risk a war in which it could rapidly conquer Europe while trading atomic blows with the United States. But a war in which Soviet forces would be compelled to engage in indefinitely continuing large-scale ground combat on the frontiers of the iron-curtain while undergoing heavy strategic bombing from European as well as American bases would probably appear an almost hopeless prospect. Thus, the strength of free Europe may easily determine whether the Soviet Union chooses to attack.

If we assume that a hot war is unlikely within the near future and that the world struggle will more probably take the form of a prolonged cold war, the critical importance of Europe to the outcome of this struggle is even more pronounced. A long cold war will be essentially a struggle for power -- power reflected in such terms as human allegiances, political influences, territorial position, economic resources, and industrial and technical potential. In this kind of conflict, the first requisite of American policy must be to prevent the Soviet bloc from attaining industrial and scientific superiority. Such superiority, especially if attained by peaceful means and without damage to the centers of Russia's own power, would be the beginning of the end for the United States and the remainder of the free world. No matter how many atom bombs we might have in stockpiles and whatever new weapons may be developed here, Communist superiority in scientific and industrial resources would permit the Soviet empire eventually to surpass us in atomic weapons and virtually all other elements of power, leaving us to choose between abject surrender and an uphill battle for survival in a war which would probably devastate the entire planet.

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The control of free Europe offers Russia the only promising opportunity for obtaining this kind of superiority. Western Europe has factories, mineral resources, transportation facilities and laboratories which are second in value only to our own. The 300,000,000 Europeans who are still free include the world's largest pool of skilled manpower and trained technicians. While these people and resources remain on our side, Russia suffers a severe long-term disadvantage. By seizing these people and resources, however, Russia would gain the means by which the United States might ultimately be overwhelmed. And at the same stroke, by eliminating free European influence from vast areas of Asia and Africa, Russia would be in a position to take over many of these areas without firing a shot.

All these things help to illustrate the premises upon which our present European policies are based. Our main purposes are to keep free Europe out of Communist hands and to help it gain sufficient strength to make a positive contribution to our own defense and to the security of other parts of the free world.

I will not attempt to describe in detail the various political, economic and military measures which we have taken since 1945 in order to realize these purposes. You are already familiar with the main outlines of the European Recovery Program, the North Atlantic Treaty, and the movement toward European unity. I believe it will be more profitable for us to focus attention upon the current situation in Europe.

Since the beginning of NATO in 1949, a large measure of our energy in Europe has been devoted to the task of trying to create satisfactory military defenses. The North Atlantic Treaty involved more than promises of mutual assistance in case of
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attack. It also provided for a day-to-day working relationship in creating more effective means of defense. Under the terms of this treaty and through the organization created by the treaty a great many things have been accomplished. Joint strategic plans for defense of the North Atlantic area have been agreed upon. Integrated allied command arrangements have been established, both for the European continent and for the North Atlantic Ocean area. The United States has undertaken a large scale military aid program, under which more than 12 billion dollars in money and materials has been provided to support the defense efforts of our European allies. A large number of joint air bases and other military facilities have been constructed through common financing. The European governments have greatly increased their own defense expenditures, have lengthened their periods of military service and have gradually developed forces to fill the almost total military vacuum which existed in 1949.

At the present time, there are 96 NATO divisions in existence in the European area, including Turkey, plus about 4,000 aircraft. These figures include both active divisions and divisions which can be fully mobilized within 30 days. Compared with the defensive power available in 1949 this force is impressive. However, it is necessary to keep in mind the fact that the present available force is roughly 45 divisions and 6,000 aircraft below what the NATO military authorities have estimated to be the minimum required for the defense of Europe in 1954.

If we are able to resolve the political difficulties impeding a German contribution to European defense, this gap can be reduced somewhat. However, there is no prospect that it can be filled within the foreseeable future. Even if the United States
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provided all the equipment required for the creation of additional divisions, it is improbable that the European governments would be economically capable of maintaining the divisions thus created.

At present, NATO military experts are making a new study of force requirements in the light of modern weapons and may produce a new estimate of requirements which can be fulfilled. In the meantime, however, we and our European allies have no alternative but to accept the military risks attendant upon these inadequate forces and to work together to increase their size and improve their quality gradually, as our capabilities permit. While it is believed that the present forces could not stop an all-out Soviet attack against Europe, they nevertheless have considerable value. They are already sufficiently strong so that the Soviet Union would have to bring up additional forces into occupied Europe before launching an attack, which probably could not be done without our knowledge. The forces now existing could also inflict serious damage on the enemy and might be able to retain important foot-holds on the continent for future counter attacks. For all these reasons, we regard the NATO defense program as a valuable investment in American security.

The major obstacle encountered in building European defenses are political and economic. Europe's political and economic problems also concern us for other reasons. Communist political and economic aggression is fully as dangerous as Communist military aggression, and Communism derives great advantages from the political and economic weaknesses of free societies. From the standpoint of America's own security interests, a Communist political victory in a given country, such as France or Italy, might be even more dangerous than Communist military conquests, because it would be very difficult for us to prevent a freely

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elected Communist government from taking power. Moreover, the peaceful acquisition of Western European resources would be much more beneficial to the Soviet empire than their acquisition under conditions of all-out war, when the utilization of these resources might be neutralized by military action.

Free Europe's economic problems are very deep-seated. The decline in normal production and the immense property damage in World War II are easily understood, but some of the other injuries are less well known.

We must remember that Europe has not been able for many years to export enough goods to pay for its essential imports. Even before World War II, Europe suffered a regular trade deficit of about 1.5 billion dollars annually. However, this trade deficit was balanced by European earnings from "invisibles", such as shipping services and returns on foreign investments. After the war, these invisibles really became invisible. Instead of getting a net income from investments and shipping services, Europe found itself in a debtor position.

The war also disrupted established trade patterns. Many European countries lost access to valuable colonial markets and sources of raw materials. All over the world, the prices of the things Europe has to sell went down, while the prices of food and raw materials which Europe must import went up. Moreover, the closing of the iron curtain over Eastern Europe destroyed a mutually valuable trading relationship. For many years, Europe had exchanged manufactured goods to Eastern Europe for lumber, food and fuel. Now, this trade can be conducted only on terms approved by Russia.

European factories have been rebuilt and its firms are producing again. Over-all production is well above pre-war levels.

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But the overseas investments and colonies cannot be regained. Europe is struggling hard to find markets and sources of supply, without which the European economy can never be self-sustaining. Meanwhile, there is still widespread misery and poverty. The average citizen of free Europe earns about one-third the income of the average American and pays a slightly larger percentage of this income in taxes. In some countries, such as Italy, the average income is about one-fifth that of the average American. This provides a happy hunting ground for the Communists and imposes severe limitations on the power of governments to sustain a large defense program.

The United States faces a hard choice in dealing with Europe's economic problems. We can't afford to let the European economy go down the drain, for obvious security reasons. On the other hand, we can't go on forever supporting Europe through grants of dollar aid. We are now working simultaneously along several different lines to help Europe find lasting solutions to its problems. While reducing direct economic aid, we are giving Europe an opportunity to earn dollars through military production in Europe, and thereby obtain temporary relief from dollar deficits. We are accepting the necessity of trade between free Europe and Soviet Europe, provided the West gains a net economic advantage and provided trade in vital strategic materials is barred. We are indirectly helping the European economy through our technical assistance program, which increases the supply of raw materials from underdeveloped areas. We are considering ways to stimulate greater investment of private capital in Europe. Finally, we are reviewing our own trade and tariff policies. It seems certain that Europe will always suffer a dollar shortage unless Europeans can sell more goods to the United States. Both American export trade and American security interests would be

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served by permitting Europe easier access to our markets. However, many of our domestic producers fear European competition, and the revision of our trade and tariff policies involves delicate internal problems, both economic and political.

Turning to the political picture, we find three categories of problems which concern the United States. First is the continued influence of local Communist parties. Second is the general instability of several European governments. Third is the failure of the European nations to achieve unity among themselves.

Without the economic up-lift made possible by the European Recovery Program and the added security provided by NATO, it is highly probable that one or more Western European nations would already have succumbed to internal Communist influence. This might have set off a chain reaction which would have brought most of Western Europe under the control of the Kremlin. This tragedy has not only been averted, but we can note with satisfaction that Communist influence in most free European countries has steadily declined since 1946. However, Communist influence remains very strong in France, where the Communist received roughly 25 percent of the vote in the last elections, and in Italy, where they and their socialist allies received 35 percent of the vote. In fact, Communist voting strength in Italy is now at an all-time peak, although the para-military organization which they maintained after the war has been largely eliminated, and it is not believed that the Italian Communists have the power to seize control of the government by armed revolt.

It must be understood that the Communist vote in France and Italy does not reflect the number of people actually dedicated to the service of the Soviet Union. It is estimated that roughly 5 percent of the people who vote Communist are firmly under party discipline.

discipline. The great majority of the Communist voters are people who have no deep-seated ideological convictions, but who cast their vote for the Communists in order to register a protest against social and economic conditions which they dislike.

So long as economic distress and social injustice prevail widely in countries like France and Italy, there seems to be little prospect of the elimination of Communist influence. On the other hand, under present circumstance, it does not appear that the Communists have the power to gain control of the Governments of these countries. Of course, a real danger might develop if there were a sharp economic decline in either of these countries. A serious depression with mass unemployment and falling living standards almost certainly would boost the political power of the Communists and might permit a Communist political take-over. This is one of the reasons why we must constantly keep the European economic situation under review.

~~There~~ There is little that the United States can do about the recurrent instability of European governments. To a large extent this instability is built into their constitutional systems, and could only be eliminated by thorough-going constitutional reform. The United States Government supports such reform, but we are not able to exert effective pressure in a field which is so clearly a matter of domestic affairs.

The instability of European governments is not as serious a problem as it some times appears to casual observers. France, for example, has had a large number of different "governments" since World War II, but the same faces have appeared in most of these governments. Usually only a small number of cabinet posts have

have been re-shuffled, without any significant reorientation of policy. Meanwhile, the bureaucracy has continued to function regardless of these cabinet changes. The main problem presented by this kind of governmental instability is that it inhibits the power of governments to reach decisions on different issues. Since every governing coalition is in perpetual fear of falling, the leadership often hesitates to make any decision at all whenever there is disagreement within the coalition.

The aspect of the European political scene to which the United States has devoted greatest attention is the movement toward European unity. As early as World War I, Lord Gray made reference to "the anarchy that is Europe". His reference was clear. Within a geographical area smaller than the United States, there were more than 25 separate nations, each pursuing its own interests and competing with one another. Two catastrophic world wars grew out of these rivalries.

Today Eastern Europe has been unified by force. The nations of free Europe have gradually attained a level of cooperation unprecedented in their histories, but they are still a long way from the kind of unity which we believe is necessary to their future survival and progress. The United States Government, with consistent support of the Congress, has exerted very strong pressure on the European nations to unify themselves. We know that the Communist political menace will always be greater if the Communists are able to pick off small nations one at a time than if they are faced with the task of trying to take over a broad European community. We know that traditional political rivalries among Western European nations consume much of their energies and tend to divert their attention from the overriding Soviet menace. We are convinced that long-range economic stability in Europe is possible only if Europe develops a broad

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common market similar to that which exists in the United States, permitting greater industrial specialization and the economies of mass production and distribution. Finally, we are convinced that only a united Europe can sustain an adequate system of defense.

The most striking progress toward unity has been made by six nations of Western Europe which we now refer to as the "community of six". These countries -- France, Western Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and The Netherlands -- have already transferred their national jurisdiction over the production and distribution of coal and steel to a supra-national authority known as the European Coal and Steel Community. These same six nations are now considering a treaty designed to establish a European Defense Community and are working on another treaty which, if completed and ratified, will create a European Political Community.

At the moment, our attention is focused primarily upon the EDC Treaty, for good reason. This Treaty not only represents a decisive step on the road to unity, but also appears to provide the best available method of restoring the sovereignty of West Germany and permitting a substantial German contribution to the NATO defense system. All the NATO governments, including France, have agreed in principle on the necessity of a German military contribution. However, with memories of German militarism still fresh in their minds, the French are extremely reluctant to see the creation of a German national army under independent German control. For this reason, the French government proposed that the German contribution be made through a common European army, under the supervision of a supra-national authority. Germany and the other four members of the Community of Six accepted this suggestion

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suggestion and the EDC Treaty - signed in May 1952 - is the result.

The parliaments of Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands have approved the EDC Treaty. Unfortunately, the French parliament is having great difficulty in accepting France's own proposal. Many Frenchmen do not want to see the Germans re-armed under any circumstances. Others are less concerned about German rearmament, but are fearful that the vigorous, resurgent German nation will eventually come to dominate the EDC and relegate France to a secondary power position on the continent. In large part, also, the delay in action by the French parliament results from the general political instability which I have already discussed.

American officials have been greatly alarmed by French indecision on this issue. The occupation of Germany is already an anachronism. Moreover, without cooperation between France and Germany, there can be no hope of a solid European defense system nor a vigorous European economy. For this reason, Secretary Dulles served notice last December that French failure to ratify the EDC would bring about an "agonizing reappraisal" of American policies.

Speculation on the possible results of such a reappraisal is probably not very useful at this time. Some have suggested that, in the event EDC fails, we should seek to rearm Germany independently and establish a bilateral defense relationship. This would be very difficult to work out without the consent of France and Great Britain, which are also occupying powers. It has been suggested that Germany might be brought into NATO, but this solution seems less acceptable to France than EDC. Still others have suggested that the United States should withdraw its forces from Europe and develop a strategy based on peripheral defense if Franco-German cooperation proves impossible. While a

shift

shift of emphasis towards peripheral defense is by no means out of the question, we have the greatest doubts that such a step would actually serve American security interests. De-emphasis of continental defense, aside from its military implications, might have serious political repercussions. It might be the opening wedge for the growth of strong neutralist influence in Europe, which would eventually seek to protect Europe by appeasement of the Soviet Union. Thus, we are continuing to support EDC as the best alternative now available, and are urging the French government to press for a parliamentary decision within the next few weeks.

In any discussion of the problems faced in the conduct of our European relations, it is useful to mention our efforts to resolve disputes among our friends. Frequently the United States has no great interest in the substance of a particular dispute, but is deeply concerned about how a dispute may affect cooperation among the free nations. Trieste is a typical example. Italy and Yugoslavia are contending bitterly over possession of this territory. In the past, our Government has expressed a preference for Italian control, but our real interest is to get the dispute settled on terms satisfactory to both Yugoslavia and Italy, so that they will quit sniping at each other and begin to work together to protect the security of Southern Europe. In the same way, we are encouraging France and Germany to reach agreement on the future status of the Saar, and will accept any solution satisfactory to the countries principally concerned. In cases of this kind, it is neither possible nor desirable to try to impose a tailor-made "American" solution, but it is very much in our interest to use our good offices to find some kind of solution.

The last problem I want to mention today is rather intangible, but extremely important. I refer to the trend of psychological attitudes in Europe. In the final analysis,

diplomatic and military leaders cannot assure cooperation between Europe and North America. This cooperation will depend fundamentally upon the state of public opinion here and abroad.

As Secretary Dulles once pointed out, diplomacy is not a popularity contest. At the same time, successful governmental cooperation in political, economic and military affairs is possible only if there is a large measure of mutual confidence and respect among the peoples who support these governments. For this reason, we have to keep a close eye on European psychological developments.

Some of these developments are disturbing. We know that many Europeans who are not Communists have feelings of suspicion and resentment toward the United States. Wealth and power rarely attract affection, and we have a great deal of both. American pressures on European governments, however necessary for the success of our policies, naturally cause nationalist resentments. Intemperate and unfair criticisms of Europe in this country produce a bad reaction abroad. American tourists and even American GI's in Europe are not always good diplomats for the United States. Also, to an increasing extent, the United States tends to be mentally associated with the painful burdens of European rearmament, which does not help our popularity or prestige.

Perhaps the greatest source of resentment toward the United States is the feeling -- sometimes vague -- that Europe has somehow handed over its destiny to us. Many Europeans are certain that the ultimate decisions of war or peace will be American decisions, that we will decide if and where the continent will be defended, that our economic policies will determine their living standards and that our political prejudices will enter into the fabric of their institutions. In brief, they feel

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that their whole future depends upon a nation over which they have no control -- a nation not yet certain of its role in world affairs and not yet sufficiently experienced in world leadership.

The fear of another war pervades all European thinking about international affairs. They are convinced that the outcome of World War III would be little more than of academic interest to Europe -- that Europe would be destroyed no matter who won. They do not believe that the United States would actually start an aggressive war, but they greatly fear war through mutual miscalculation.

There's not a great deal that we Americans can do about some of these suspicions and fears. The dominant position of America in the affairs of the free world is an inescapable fact, and it is quite true that European civilization may be at the mercy of decisions made in this country. But there are some things that we can and must do to reassure the Europeans. We must avoid belligerent pronouncements. We must try to help the American people understand European problems, so as to minimize exaggerated criticism. We must carefully take account of European interests in defining our own policies, including even those domestic policies which indirectly affect Europe. We cannot avoid diplomatic pressures, but we are exercising great caution as to the means by which these pressures are exerted. Finally, we have recognized the necessity of constant consultation with our European allies on matters of common interest, and we are steadily developing these practices of consultation.

All things considered, we do not find present European attitudes a cause for alarm. To some extent, increased criticism of the United States is a sign of growing self-confidence and self-sufficiency in Europe itself, which is desirable. The vast majority of the people of Europe support the policies which their

governments have worked out in cooperation with the United States and have done relatively little griping about the sacrifices which some of these policies involve. The differences between free Europe and North America are far less significant than their common interests, and this fact is recognized by a majority on both sides of the Atlantic.

The tactics of Russia at Berlin and elsewhere have rendered their present world strategy as clear as if we had been handed a full set of blueprints. They are going to try, by every possible means, to divide the free world -- in particular, to pull Western Europe away from the United States. They have a number of good issues to work on, such as France's painful war in Indo-China and Britain's desperate need for expanded trade. We can also be sure that Communist propaganda will be quick to pounce on every misstep we make in its campaign to portray the United States as the principal villain in the world drama. It is essential that we make a major effort to resist these divisive influences. It is more important than ever before that we keep allied interests constantly in mind and that our basic policies, if at all possible, be a product of friendly agreement with other free nations. If we blend imagination and firmness with patience and restraint, we and our European partners have a very good chance to solve the most difficult problems now confronting us and to move forward to a position of greater security and prosperity.

