

THE POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES IN
THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

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by

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I am very glad indeed to be here again to talk on this general subject and to offer my views for an exchange of views with members of the Armed Services.

A large part of what I have to say will deal with the various geographical areas of the world. But I want to say something at the outset about what might be described as the technical position of the United States today in the international sphere and to compare it, in a broad general way, with the situation of the Soviet Union.

~~Of course too much can be made of the bipolar nature of the existing international society. There is a third force to be taken into account; yet, it does ring true that the fundamental fact in international relations today is the~~

EDITORIAL NOTE: It will be noticed that at times the lecturer alluded to conditions extant during the month in which the address was given. These remarks did not prejudice the permanent value of the substance of the address and, therefore, were reprinted without change.

rivalry of the United States with the Soviet Union--the differing conceptions of the present and the future and the clashes of interests and ideals which constantly occur.

In some respects, I think the position of the United States today in the international society is a very strong one. It is obvious, for example, that we wield today an unrivaled economic power. We have generated an enormous economic machine in the United States, and for a backlog or for whatever may come in the future this machine has a fundamental value.

I think we may say, too, that important progress has been made in some other respects in the course of the last few years. One of the things to which I attach importance today is the political unity of the United States in the field of foreign affairs. Traditionally, one of the hampering factors in the conduct of American foreign policy has frequently been partisanship and division. I think we are in a very happy situation today where partisanship has been reduced to a minimum, and I think it is very largely due to the course of events of the last few years.

It seems to me that the election of President Eisenhower in 1952 was on the whole an extraordinarily fortunate event. Of course, I do not speak as a partisan; I speak as an historian. The foreign policy of the new administration in many respects was a continuation of the foreign policy of the

preceding administration. But the election of a Republican President brought new elements to the support of that policy.

We have had many striking examples of united action because the new administration did follow in its broad lines the policy of its predecessor. The action of the Congress of the United States with regard to Formosa, for example, is an interesting exhibition of national unity. I am not going to concern myself at the moment with the rightness or wrongness of this particular decision, but I think we all recognize in international affairs that united action is itself fundamental. Sometimes the choice is not so important as the determination with which one follows up the choice. I think that the political unity of the United States in 1955 is a fact of very substantial significance in the field of foreign affairs.

In connection with this political unity, another observation should be added. I am not sure that everyone here will agree with me (and it would really be quite foolish to try to lecture with the idea of unanimity in mind), but to my way of thinking the hysteria with regard to security--fomented by ambitious politicians in the period from 1952 to 1954--had an unhappy effect upon the national scene. It was fundamentally destructive so far as foreign policy was concerned. It placed a heavy emphasis on questions which were of secondary significance as compared with the large scheme of foreign policy. The

decline of this hysteria is a very important factor in strengthening the position of the United States.

There are two other remarks that I want to make, one which has a little longer historical background but which seems to me of fundamental importance. I might say, parenthetically, that I read with pain Walter Lippmann's recent book, The Public Philosophy, in which he seems to come to the conclusion that a democracy cannot conduct foreign affairs at all. In November, I am going to give three lectures on Popular Government and Foreign Policy for the Ford Fund for Adult Education, in which I try to show that after all we do rather better than Mr. Lippmann (who was my contemporary at Harvard) seems to think we can do.

One of these ways in which we do better--and it is fundamental--is in the efficient coordination of both the planning and the acting side of the Government that existed a decade ago. There are two elements in this which interest me particularly, but since this is a lecture which covers the high spots over a broad range, I am not going into them in detail. They are the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council. We were talking about this on the way up here to the College. Obviously, a fundamental aspect of the conduct of foreign affairs--and indeed for that matter of military and naval operations--is knowledge. We need a lot of it. As a matter of fact,

some of the major mistakes in the foreign policy of the United States are made through deficient information. For example, I do not suppose that if we had had all the facts at our command we would have done what we did in Korea in 1949.

The Central Intelligence Agency is a highly specialized agency under extraordinarily competent leadership. General Walter Bedell Smith, whom I have the honor of knowing, is one of the great public servants of the epoch. I also think that Allen Dulles, who is now in charge of C.I.A., is another one. I think that one of the most important agencies in the fact-finding side of the Government is in very good hands.

I was interested a little while ago, when reading the London Economist (which I regard as the finest weekly periodical I know) in the remark that the forming of a National Security Council might represent an epoch in the Constitutional development of the United States. ~~I think there is something in that.~~ I think that in the National Security Council, in which are represented the Defense services--the C.I.A., the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Treasury, and, of course, the State Department--we have the best coordinating agency we have ever had from the point of view of the field of foreign policy. This Constitutional change which came about in 1947, and which it seems to me has been utilized in a most intelligent and constructive way by the present President of the United States, is

to my mind another step forward so far as operations in international affairs are concerned.

I think we may also say--and this, again, is a matter of perspective--that compared with the past the American people are more aware than ever before of the importance of maintaining the physical power of the United States. This is elementary to such an audience as this, but looking at the matter historically it is perfectly obvious that the people of the United States have underestimated the role of force in international affairs. There is such a thing as overestimating it, and perhaps I shall give you some examples of that before I close this lecture. But we are more nearly in a realistic position today with regard to physical power than we have been at earlier periods in our history.

But, on the other hand, there is a negative side to the account. Before I attempt an analysis from a geographical point of view, I want to make two or three points on the negative side. I think we may generally say that one of the issues that confronts us at the present time is the very great prosperity which reigns in the United States and the tendency, therefore, to think in economic terms of a problem that is more than economics in the narrower sense.

I keep thinking, possibly without sufficient justification, of Great Britain in the 1930's. Here was a country

blessed with great prosperity in the years right after the recovery from the depression. The result was a foreign policy that deceived itself as to the facts of life, of a governmental policy that laid the emphasis on internal matters, and managed to lull itself into a false sense of security at a time when the greatest of world menaces was building up.

I do not say that will happen here. But the gentlemen who at the present time are so insistent upon a balanced budget, and the numerous individuals in Washington who would rather lower our taxes than do anything else (I can understand why, politically, this is an ambition of course) are people to watch because there is no more essential interest than the national security of the United States. This transcends any economic values. Of course it must be rationally interpreted and intelligently developed. But I am a little afraid that in the kind of world we live in today prosperity will make us soft.

It is only fair to say that I was tremendously pleased in this connection with the decision of the Secretary of Defense, Charles E. Wilson, the other day--a decision apparently made with the concurrence of the Secretary of the Treasury--that the military budget would not be drastically cut this next year. To me, this was a fundamental decision.

There is a second limitation on the foreign policy of the

United States, looking at the matter from the broadest angle of vision. We operate--and this has become pretty generally recognized--with our allies in the present world. Only the most unobserving of American politicians would fail to recognize the fact that we have to have allies in the kind of world we live in today. It is hard to operate with other democratic nations. In the international sphere, the United States has to depend upon persuasion in dealing with its allies; it cannot depend upon coercion. This, of course, is increasingly true because back in 1947 there was a leverage in the economic aid we were giving them. But when you go to Europe today and observe the remarkable signs of prosperity in almost every country--I think they are remarkable, even France has done better than it has done in some time--you recognize also the difficulties of our own task. We have to assert a moral leadership without the possibility of coercion, and this makes the problem inevitably difficult.

With regard to the position of the United States, there are two other points that ought to be mentioned. A very important point for us to notice is that our relative position in one respect has of course declined; that is, we were at one time sole possessors of the atomic bomb. We developed the hydrogen bomb. But we are now confronted with the fact that the Russians have both, and we have lost the relative advantage.

Though the development of atomic weapons is bound to go on, it seems to me that we may reach the point (I was going to say "we will reach it") where on one side or the other the use of these enormous weapons of destruction will tend to cancel out. We are no longer in a position where we have the absolute superiority. We ourselves are threatened now as we were not threatened, of course, in 1945 and the years immediately following.

Finally, looking at the position of the United States in the international sphere from this broad and general point of view, we ourselves are almost inescapably in the position of being to a certain extent the defenders of the status quo. I shall examine that point a little more in detail as I pass through the various geographical areas. But I will put it in another way. The Communists can promise the earth--their promises will never be fulfilled, but they can promise. We have to deal with an existing society; we have to deal with existing societies in our intercourse in the international sphere, and this creates a difficult problem. So while I think the position of the United States is strong from many points of view, I think we ought to recognize its real limitations.

Let us look for a moment at the Russian point of view and see what their weaknesses and strengths are. As one would expect, there is something to be said on both sides. I think the

Russian government has certain great advantages in the international competition. The principal advantage is the advantage that inheres in any totalitarian government. It is not an argument for totalitarianism, but it is one of the advantages of totalitarianism. That advantage is that the capacity for instant decisions and making shifts of policy is far greater in a totalitarian regime than it is in a democratic regime.

Whether Mr. Lippmann likes it or not (and he appears to be very unhappy about it), the foreign policy of a great democratic nation has to be integrated with the public opinion of that nation. This is inevitable, fundamental and inescapable. It seems to be the case to a substantial degree--I do not mean to a total degree--that the Russians can manipulate their opinion to a remarkable extent. If they want to be rough, they can be rough; if they want to smile, they can smile; they can do both. They can make instantaneous changes, as they constantly do. They can oppose a treaty with Austria for years on grounds that have not the slightest moral justification. Then, suddenly, they can come to you some day and say: "O. K., we will give you a treaty with Austria." We cannot make those abrupt shifts in the field of American foreign policy. I think there is an enormous advantage that inheres in the nature of a totalitarian state.

The second advantage which the Russian government has in

the field of foreign affairs is the advantage to which I have already alluded by a contrast. The Russians can identify themselves with all sorts of movements which it is not so easy for us to recognize. They can talk about "the better world"; they can talk about "the end of colonialism"; they can associate themselves with the discontent of the existing order, as they do. They have a powerful engine of policy. So that is that side of the account, as far as the Russians are concerned.

But the Kremlin has limitations. I think that these limitations are something to be noted. I would say that the principal limitation is the limitation inherent in their economic system. They are in a position where they have an increasingly difficult domestic problem. I would suspect that this domestic problem would become more rather than less difficult from a variety of points of view and would be a seriously limiting factor so far as actual armed aggression is concerned.

It is a most curious fact that neither in Russia nor in China, today, does there seem to be any misgiving whatsoever about the increase in population. An increase in population may be a good thing or it may be a bad thing, according to national circumstances. But if you have a large rate of increasing population and if at the same time you pursue a policy of industrialization on a very substantial scale, as the Russians have done, you have then to face an agricultural problem. It

is perfectly clear, as we all know, that the Russians face a serious agricultural problem at the present time.

Sometimes I think that the scope and difficulty of that problem is not entirely understood. One of the most illuminating conversations that I have ever had with anybody in the State Department was some years ago, when it was pointed out to me that the mechanization of Russian agriculture (which is a part of their idea) inevitably involves a tremendous strain on the petroleum resources of Russia and produces the kind of society which is technologically vulnerable. For the Russians to operate in a large way in the international sphere, in the military sense of the term, would mean a tremendous drain upon their gasoline supplies and this would be accompanied by a difficult problem from the agricultural point of view. I think that this is a matter of considerable importance.

~~I think, too, we may see (this is a matter on which we cannot get the facts too clearly) that there are some of the satellite states who are in many respects unreliable. After all, even under communism, they have their national ego. From the Communist point of view there is a very bad example of the success of a more independent type of social organization in Tito's Yugoslavia. While it would be romantic to assume that the satellite states can break away from Russia, or possibly even that they want to break away at the present time, it is~~

not romantic to assume that they will not be entirely at the command of the Kremlin.

Furthermore, in speaking of these general elements in the international situation, there seem to be indications that there is growing up in Russia a larger and larger relatively prosperous class that puts the emphasis on internal improvement and a raising of the standard of living. How far this process will go one cannot say, but it is a factor that it is desirable to take account of from a long-term point of view.

These are general considerations with regard to the position of the United States today. Now let us look at the position of the United States in regard to geographical areas of the world.

I am going to begin by taking that area in which our problems are relatively simple--I do not mean that any international problem is child's play--and that is the field of Latin America. In the field of Latin America we have our difficulties. But I do not suppose that today they are anywhere nearly as great as the difficulties connected with our position in Europe or with our position in Asia.

There has been a tendency in recent years to minimize the significance of Latin America. In speaking in relative terms, it is right to put it in a place far inferior to that occupied by Europe, and perhaps by the Far East. But, still, Latin

America is important to us. For one thing, it is important to us because there is a special tie with Latin America that involves the defense of the Panama Canal. In other words, it is important in part from strategic reasons: for reasons of grand strategy and national security. I suppose that it is not so important as it was in the Second World War, when the Germans were moving down toward Dakar. I suppose (and I am willing to be corrected if I am wrong) that if there is a Third World War the lines of attack will be over the Pole to the northward of the United States rather than in any way through the south. But there is still a certain strategic importance.

There is also a certain economic importance. We have attained such an enormous development that we are today dependent upon the economic resources of other parts of the world in varying degrees. But, as you know, we have had economic development, for instance, in the oil industry in Venezuela. We have a very substantial stake in Chilean copper. In the field of the specifics, like quinine, we have an interest which cannot be satisfied within the borders of the United States. There are economic factors in Latin America which weigh upon and must influence the development of American foreign policy. And, finally, we have an ideological interest in Latin America. The victory of the Communist regime within any part of the world shakes the authority of contrary systems and is naturally

opposed to the interests of the United States.

Looking at the Latin American situation as a whole, what are the weaknesses and strengths in our position relative to Latin America? Let me take the strengths first. In what respect are we in a favorable position with regard to Latin America? I should say there are three points that I want particularly to mention.

One of these points is the fact that there is an important element there in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is likely to be the foe of Communist-oriented governments. Sometimes there is a misunderstanding on the role of the church in Latin America. When I wrote my little book, The U. S. and the Caribbean, published in 1947, I was interested to observe that in some parts of Latin America, which are normally Catholic, the indifference with regard to the church is very strong. If you know Guatemala, for example, ~~this is a case where this~~ statement might be made. But in the larger states of Latin America, the Catholic Church is a substantial influence. I do not suppose we are ready to make an historical judgment with regard to recent events in Argentina, but it seems not at all unlikely that it played a very large part in the overthrow of Juan Domingo Perón. The influence of this church should be cast against Communist policy.

With regard to the previous history of Latin America, I think an interesting thing to observe is that whenever American States deviate from a democratic course and are not democratic in their organization (with regard to some of them, it might rather be put the other way and be said that they occasionally deviate into the democratic course), the kind of government that seems to exist there is usually military government, and it is a military government of the Right rather than a military government of the Left. There is, for example, such a regime as the regime of Jimenez in Venezuela at the present day. It is not a lovely government, but it certainly is not a Left-wing government. The government in Colombia at the present time, that of President Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, is a government which the New York Times does not like very much (and that is understandable), but it certainly is not a Left-wing government. Indeed, there has not yet been amongst the military class in Latin America ~~any substantial attachment to the Communist ideology.~~ Of course the exception, I suppose, was the Arbenz regime in Guatemala. I think, incidentally, that this points to the need of something: I think that a greater degree of understanding and of association between the Latin American military class and that of the United States is in our interest, and it might be a very important factor in the long run.

So far as the United States and Latin America are concerned,

in the third place there are very wide areas in Latin America which are, if not economically dependent upon the United States, closely associated with the United States. In the Caribbean, for example, our economic interests play an enormous role.

When I saw Mr. Braden in New York two or three years ago, I remember his remarking to me that the Communist regime in Cuba could be starved out very readily indeed and that the economic liaison between the United States and Cuba was so close that it would be hardly possible for a regime of the Left to subsist. If you will think back, as some of you can I am sure, to the Revolution of 1932, which brought Ramón Grau San Martín into power for the first time, you will remember that this regime was simply not viable. We would not recognize it and it was not viable in part certainly because of the hostility of the United States. Even some of the larger states have a tremendous economic tie with the United States--Brazil, for example. Here, again, we have a factor of substantial significance from the positive point of view.

There is, however, another point of view, and I want to say what the limitations are on our policy with Latin America. Incidentally, in making some of these comments on one side or the other, I think we have to avoid the notion that all difficulties are easily curable. There are inherent problems in international affairs, and even with intelligence and good will they are likely to remain for some time to come.

One of our limitations--and one which may or may not be in sound policy--is the limitation which we have imposed upon ourselves by the protocols of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. As you know, we have solemnly pledged ourselves not to intervene by physical force in the domestic affairs of the Latin American States and it would be a serious matter to violate this pledge. We have also pledged ourselves at the Conference in Bogotá to take a stand against collective intervention. I suppose that the direct physical pressure which the United States has occasionally exerted against regimes which it disliked in the Caribbean area is, today, pretty much out of the question. This is the difficulty inherent in the situation.

There is a second difficulty--and this, again, is very difficult to get around. Latin American States feel today in the main somewhat neglected, and they have been neglected relatively speaking. The policy of our economic aid to Europe and the emphasis placed on the Orient in recent years (quite justifiably, in my judgment) have put the Latin American States in a subordinate position. There is a real resentment in some Latin American States with regard to the United States. They like to be loved, and we find it difficult to love everybody at once. This is, indeed, a large order. This is a serious problem and it is not one that is going to be solved offhand. I doubt if Vice President Nixon solved it in his visit to Latin America.

There is also another matter which I think is of some importance from this point of view: whereas communism per se is not certainly so dangerous in Latin America as it is in some other areas the Communists have a useful weapon, and that is the weapon of "nationalism." They can beat the drums with regard to exploitation, as they like to call it; they can beat the drums about the nefarious role of American capitalism. This is an effective weapon. Personally, it seems to me that nothing could be better for Latin America and nothing could in the long run contribute more to a stable and prosperous society than the entry of American capital on a substantial scale.

But you know how it is. You know how in Brazil, for example, there is violent opposition to private industry in oil. One of the first things which the Lonardi government in Argentina did was to say that it would not go through with the agreements that the Perón régime was about to make with American oil interests. The Communists can beat the nationalist drum in a way that is very embarrassing to our interests. They not only can beat the nationalist drum, but they can beat the drum of social improvement.

I think we have another problem there that is awfully difficult to solve in terms of our own power and capability to act. Reactionary régimes in Latin America may suit us very well

for a while. The régime which now exists in Venezuela is very favorable to American interests--and that is nice for the time being. But the difficulty is that these reactionary régimes will produce a popular reaction that is not only anti-American and anti-capitalist but is based upon the craving for social betterment, which is characteristic of the world today. I frankly confess that I do not know exactly how we would deal with a situation of that kind.

Latin America, as I say, is the least important area. But I think we may fairly say that the most important area is Europe. This, of course, has been the consistent policy of our Government (without the cooperation of some very eminent individuals) since 1945. Looking at the matter historically, in order to get our bearings before I analyze the contemporary European situation, there has been substantial progress made. If we think of it historically--and not in the sense of the absolutely contemporary--it seems to me it is perfectly clear that our European policy was based on sound conceptions. I do not see how it can be denied that the Marshall Plan was a great measure of constructive statesmanship. It was based on enlightened self-interest. What was at stake was the integrity of an economic and political system which was in our interest in a part of the world which, subjected to Russian infiltration, would be of all the most dangerous--a region of high technological capacity, of large resources, and the most important

region outside the United States in the world from the economic point of view. The Marshall Plan was a great step. So, too, was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This was a tremendous idea. It was based upon the same inevitable hypothesis: that we need to protect Europe from either military or ideological penetration.

In the third place, in addition to the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, it seems to me it was wise and sagacious statesmanship that emphasized the necessity of admitting Germany to a part in the scheme of things. Of course this policy, too, has been to a certain degree successful--largely due to the fact that probably the most clear-headed, eminent and courageous statesman in Continental Europe today is the Chancellor of the German Reich, Konrad Adenauer.

Now this is all very well. But I think there are many reasons for a little bit of alarm with regard to our European situation at the present time. There are important aspects of our situation in Europe which I want to mention and which must give cause for disquietude. The economic prosperity of Europe is substantial, today. Having been abroad practically every year since 1945, I have been deeply impressed by it. My elder boy just landed in London two or three weeks ago on sabbatical leave there. He writes me that the contrast between 1950, when he was there previously, and 1955 seems to him colossal. But

even in Britain--which has made a remarkable recovery and which I think, from the point of view of foreign policy, is most clear-headed in its relation to the problems of the European States--there is some economic difficulty. While I noticed that Mr. Butler this morning tended to take a little more cheerful view than the British press has been taking during the last few weeks, the problem in Britain is a serious problem. Today, there is something like full employment in Britain and there is heavy pressure on the wage structure. The test before Britain--and a serious test it is--is the test, it seems to me, as to whether or not the British labor unions can grasp the problem that they cannot have wage increases piled on wage increases when Britain is dependent for her prosperity on her exports. The problem of the British social order is one which I can see is not going to be easy. While I do not want to be too gloomy about it--because it is against my principles to be gloomy to the point where it paralyzes the principle of action or hope--I do think that there is a problem there that is lowering before us and that may be of substantial significance.

If the situation is not easy in Great Britain, it certainly is not easy in France. Of course the French have shown an incapacity to act--or a capacity only to act late--during the past few years that is in some senses of the word tragic. We know what the situation is today. It is a very serious situation, though in my way of thinking it is being met with considerable

courage and sagacity by Edgar Faure. When I talk to my French friends (and they are generally critical of French policy), the man they throw up their hats about, as you know, is Mendès-France. I think Mendès-France is a great figure in many ways. He is a person of remarkable courage and self-assurance. But in my way of thinking Faure has some of the good qualities in Mendès-France with some others added. I think he has a better tactical sense and that he is a better manager of men. He may be able to pull through this situation. I read the Providence Journal this morning and I thought things looked a little better there than they did in the New York Times, which I read before that. But, however that may be, there is a serious problem.

You know as well as I do that the French have had to withdraw some of their divisions from NATO in North Africa. This Morocco business is very serious, and it has not been solved as of the present time. Colonially speaking, the French have an awful lot of difficulty ahead of them. France is weak in this sense, and there is a very great weakness in the whole governmental system. I do not take quite as tragic a view of it as some people do, however. As a matter of fact, I think there is a substantial body of competence in France, politically, which is much hampered by a bad political mechanism. People like Edgar Faure or Mendès-France or of the little earlier vintage of Robert Schuman, for example, are very able, devoted, and patriotic men. But the difficulties in the way of the development

of France are very great. The French, too, are feeling the economic pressures. There, too, men like Faure and Mendès-France represent a desire for social reform. This is comprehensible. I know of no city in the world so like what it was in 1912, when I first saw it, as is Paris--the housing problem in France is something to weep about. Where you have the pressure for social reform, you have also a pressure for economy in armament. The French position is not good from that point of view, and I do not think we ought to forget that fact.

Of course we have also been having difficulty in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. The Greeks and the Turks are at loggerheads over the question of Cyprus. There again the fabric of international organization, built up so painfully by American statesmanship during the last few years, is in danger. There may be a way out of this. When I feel most gloomy I console myself with a maxim that I have frequently expressed to my classes, and that is: "When things get bad enough, they frequently get better." I think that may be true of the situation in eastern Europe, but still I would not call it a lovely situation.

If I may include quite illegitimately another region in what I have to say with regard to Europe, that of the Near East--which, of course, is really not Europe, strictly speaking--we have a terrible problem there in trying to play both ends against

the middle in reconciling our interest in the Arab States and in their economic development with the interest that a very considerable part of our population inevitably feels for Israel. These are delicate problems. They are problems which are hand-made for trouble on the part of the Russians, and there is no doubt that the Russians are going to play that game.

Furthermore, to emphasize the difficulties, there is the uncertainty with regard to Germany. Konrad Adenauer is a very great statesman and he dominates the situation in Germany, but he is 79 years old. He seemed in good health when I saw him at the Harvard Commencement this year and heard him speak there. I do not think he is on the verge of expiring, or anything of that kind, but 79 is 79. Whether or not there will be in Germany a leader of the same caliber to follow him, I do not know. I think that the position in Germany of the Social Democrats is on about as low a level of partisan politics as I have ever observed in any country, including our own. Looking at the German situation, there are plenty of things to worry about in any long-term point of view.

I want to make two other points with regard to Germany. First, there is a great danger that the Saar question will cause trouble. You know what happened. You know that the French and German governments agreed upon an election of the Saar to take place on the 23rd of October. It is part of the fabric of

Franco-German understanding. The local parties are apparently operating in opposition to the arrangement that was made, and a defeat for the Saar statute on October 23 would create again some embarrassing problems from the point of view of the United States.

Finally, there is Geneva. I think there is no question that at Geneva President Eisenhower expressed the point of view of the American people. I see no evidence that President Eisenhower was deluded at Geneva into thinking that kind words and beneficent gestures would alter the whole international scene. But it seems to me that a great many people have taken Geneva far too seriously. I do not see that anything fundamental has changed, and I am worried about the possible relaxation on both sides of the Atlantic that comes from a false interpretation of what is going on in Geneva.

As you see, this is a rather gloomy picture from some points of view. If we are going to be helped out of it, I think we are probably going to be helped out of it by the Russians. They have done very well at times in making it easier for us--and they may do it again. They have done two things in the recent few weeks that I think we ought to be grateful for. I am sure that they did not do them from that point of view--you understand that I am not suggesting that the Russians are benevolent-minded, but they make mistakes. Sometimes when I

listen to some of my friends, you would think that we were the only people that made mistakes. As a matter of fact, with regard to the last decade, I would maintain stoutly that more mistakes have been made in the Kremlin than were ever made in Washington.

However that may be, I think there are two things where they miscalculated. Their vote to debate Algeria in the United Nations seems to me to be a monumental mistake. This is just the kind of feud to inflame French patriotism. You know what happened--how the French got out, whether wisely or not I do not know. But this illustrates the force of the emotions involved. I think this was a tremendous mistake. Even more cynical is this grant of arms to Egypt. But I think even more fundamental and more cynical was the attempt of the Kremlin to build up the East German government into a government instead of a mere satellite. You know what they have done. This is not going to produce a good impression in West Germany. It underlines the cynicism and unchanged purpose of the régime in Moscow. Possibly these things are suggestive. They may suggest, as I say, that the best solution--not 'solution'; I hate that word because it suggests fixity and finality--that the best answer to some of our difficulties may lie in the blunders that will be made in Moscow. I think we may count on blunders. It seems to me that Mr. Khrushchev is also made by nature to blunder. It

may very well be that these blunders will adhere to our advantage.

There is one other very important point which I want to make before I leave Europe (I find that I am going on a little longer than I expected to): we have to think also in terms of the health of the American economy. The economy is extremely healthy at the present time. The management of the economy under this administration seems to me to have been remarkably and extraordinarily skillful. But we cannot count on wise decisions as an inevitability. You may be very sure that any serious damage done to the American economy would shake our position in Europe. So there are all kinds of problems ahead from our point of view. While we want to retain the hopeful spirit out of which alone can come positive action, we certainly do not want to underestimate the difficulties. We need to give them a good deal of thought.

Finally, I have to say something of course with regard to Asia (I have left myself less time than I would wish). My fundamental assumption in the Far East is that outside of certain specialized situations the cards are very largely in the hands of the Communists. What I mean by that is merely this: that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was an excellent answer to a Russian threat on the Continent--you understand that I am not a bit squeamish about the building up of physical power, quite the opposite so far as the foreign policy of the

United States is concerned, but, on the other hand, the problem of Asia is a very much more difficult problem because there the assertion of the physical power of the United States is apt to run counter to very deep-seated prejudices. It is apt to run counter to the deep-seated prejudice of the East against the West; it is apt to be thought of in terms of colonialism; and it is apt to be thought of in terms of reaction. In a society as wretched as that the promises of the Communists appear by that very token more convincing and more alluring. If you take a relatively well-civilized society, you know that is the kind of a society that will not accept "pie in the sky" as an answer to its problems. But when you get a wretched society, there is, of course, a little greater chance of that kind of thing actually happening. So I think our problem in the Orient is a very difficult problem indeed.

I, personally, believe that the reluctance of this administration to use physical force in the Orient in Indo-China-- on the ground, at any rate--was highly desirable and was necessary. I believe that if we had intervened in Viet Nam we would have almost inevitably identified ourselves with reaction--certainly as long as the French were there--and that we would have had to fight the kind of war for which we are least qualified, probably some kind of guerrilla warfare. We have a very serious problem there.

Furthermore, we have a serious problem in Japan because the economic health of Japan is a matter of fundamental significance to the United States, and this is not easy to secure. I suppose that certainly one factor--not the only factor, not the decisive one, and not the answer to every difficulty--is in permitting the Japanese to export more freely, not exporting arms to China but civilian goods to the United States. Even so, the problem is a very large one.

I think we are doing pretty well in southern Indo-China in the support which we have given to the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. This régime does identify itself with the national psychology, and it may furnish a useful barrier against communism.

But we can be very certain that there is no easy answer to our problems in the Far East. There is no easy answer to the problem of Korea, where we have made substantial progress in building up a South Korean armed force, but where we can hardly dissociate ourselves entirely. There is no easy answer to the question of Chiang and Formosa, which is likely to be with us for a long time to come. But with regard to the Far East, I think we have to say that both public opinion and thoughtful judgment suggest the limitation of military action. Indeed, it seems to me that that is the pattern which is forming at the present time.

This has been a very sweeping review of a great many things, but I have tried to place before you, as I see it, the picture of the American position today. I shall be very happy to answer questions. Thank you!

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Professor Dexter Perkins

Professor Perkins attended Harvard University, receiving his A.B. and Ph.D. degrees. He was an instructor in history at the University of Cincinnati from 1914 to 1915, after which he was instructor, assistant professor, professor and head of the Department of History at the University of Rochester from 1915 to 1954.

In addition to his activities at the University of Rochester, Professor Perkins has served as City Historian at Rochester, New York (1936-1948); official Historian for the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, and Chairman of the Board of the Rochester Association for the United Nations.

He was the first Professor of American History and Institutions at Cambridge University (1945-1946) and in the spring of 1949, he was a visiting professor at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. His latest volume, The American Approach to Foreign Policy (1953), was originally given as the Gottesman lectures at that university.

Professor Perkins has been President of the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, Harvard University, since 1950, and the John L. Senior Professor in American Civilization at

Cornell University since 1954. He has written widely on American foreign policy and is a specialist on the Monroe Doctrine. He is the author of The Monroe Doctrine, 1867-1907; Hands Off: A History of the Monroe Doctrine; America and Two Wars; The United States and the Caribbean; and The Evolution of American Foreign Policy.