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George W. Ball

The State of the Western Alliance

From the Grand Alliance to the Western Alliance

It might seem an anomaly that I propose to speak of the Western Alliance in a nation known the world over for its devotion to neutrality. But neutrality for Switzerland has always had a special meaning. Thus I do not hesitate do discuss here an alliance of which Switzerland is not formally a part, since that alliance is essential to secure the freedom of Europe and to safeguard Western civilization.

These were the objectives that inspired Sir Winston Churchill throughout a life that spanned a turbulent period. In the course of his long lifespan, not only Western Europe, but the whole shape of world politics underwent vast changes. Vast empires crumbled, about a third of the world's population made the perilous passage from colonial dependency to some form of juridical independence, while the Soviet Union, driven by a formidable mixture of ideology and long-held imperial ambitions, established a land-based empire comprising most of Eastern Europe. Just as Winston Churchill had been the first leader to warn his own countrymen against the rising menace of Nazi Germany, he was also the first to perceive the shape and menace of what came to be called the Cold War. As early as March 1946, he told an American audience in a speech that startled the world: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent."

In some quarters Churchill's speech in Fulton, Missouri, was resented, in others deplored. Still conditioned to their wartime habit of regarding the Soviet Union as their ally, Americans found it hard to believe that they could not live at peace with Moscow in spite of macabre rumors out of Eastern Europe. Quite as much confusion existed in Europe, yet as time went on, one brutal incident after another tended to confirm the validity of Churchill's perception. And as this bitter truth became more and more accepted, the United States and the old nations of Western Europe formed an alliance to maintain a power balance that would keep the world in some kind of uneasy equilibrium. Underlying this effort was the hope that, if this equilibrium could only be maintained long enough, time would work a benign change in the policies in the Kremlin.

Today, after much struggle and anguish, the chemistry of change is clearly at work; although massive Soviet military forces still face menacingly toward the West, the Kremlin no longer speaks the same shrill language of abuse and threat. Yet the depth and meaning of change are still not altogether clear and, more than ever, we must assess with cool perception the strength and direction of the forces with which we have to contend. For we cannot ignore the dangers that lurk in the shadows, of which the most disturbing is still the menace of a Soviet Union with imperial ambitions.

Today the Kremlin's expansionist drive no longer seems aimed at Western Europe; it has found other outlets. But does that really mean it has diminished either in purpose or intensity? In America, many of the younger generation in the universities and on the threshold of responsibility completely reject the idea that the Soviet Union any longer poses a danger for the rest of the world. It is, they maintain, a rather stodgy dictatorship directed by an unimaginative bureaucracy and quite lacking in revolutionary fire. The Soviet leaders, as they see it, have accepted the status quo and now seek only peaceful coexistence with the West. In support of such a thesis, one can find encouraging developments. The Soviets have concluded an agreement that may assure somewhat easier Western access to Berlin. Instead of continuing their denunciation of a revanchist Germany, they have negotiated what amounts to a non-aggression pact with Bonn. The Soviet Union and the United States have been discussing the turning-down of the arms race in the SALT Meetings. An agreement has recently been concluded providing safeguards in the event of the accidental discharge of nuclear weapons, and East and West seem to be moving toward some kind of European Security Conference.

But do these events represent a serious change of heart and purpose? Against affirmative evidence is the fact that the Soviet leaders still regard the Iron Curtain as a kind of cage, denying the inmates access to the West. The Wall still stands in Berlin, where efforts to escape are met with the same remorseless staccato of machine-gun fire. The slightest movement of countries in Moscow's Eastern European empire to depart from the strict ideology of the Kremlin, or even to assert a nationalist identity, are ruthlessly put down. Of course, that does not mean that we should cease to probe Soviet intentions and to take advantage of areas of common interest wherever we can find them. But it would be imprudent to let wishful thinking lead us to a false assessment of the evidence; for a strong case can be made that these changes in Soviet conduct are primarily tactical responses and represent no ultimate abandonment of the Kremlin's long-term ambitions.

Changes of Soviet Policy

Why are the Soviets pursuing what appears as a more reasonable line? No doubt one explanation relates to the internal pressures to allocate a larger share of their finite resources to the consumer sector, since there is growing awareness that fifty years of Communism should entitle the normal Soviet citizen to something more than a one-room apartment in Moscow; yet, so the argument goes, if the Kremlin is to deny resources to its own generals, it needs to show a reduction of tensions with Western Europe.

But the element that would seem to explain Soviet behavior most compellingly is fear of an antagonistic China. That fear—and the hatred that goes with it—is not merely founded on an ideological dispute; it has deep roots in race, in history and geography. Between Russia and China stretches a land boundary of 4600 miles, interrupted toward its eastern end by Outer Mongolia, a juridically independent country about half the size of Europe, inhabited by only about a million people and controlled by the Soviet Union. Its land boundary with Siberia extends for an additional 2400 miles. What terrifies the Kremlin is that though China is a hopelessly crowded country, Siberia, to the North, is an empty continent. Just how empty is hard to understand until one realizes that in the whole of the Soviet Union east of the Urals there are only fifty-eight million inhabitants, of whom roughly two-thirds are non-Slavic.

It is here that one finds a central clue to Soviet anxieties, because the Soviet leadership has long been obsessed with the fear of successful separatist movements in the non-Slavic states. Thus, the Soviets are deeply disquieted not only by strident Chinese demands that they be given back the areas of Siberia taken from them in times of weakness during the nineteenth century, but also by an insistent Chinese propaganda in the form of radio broadcasts in Uighur, Uzbek and Kazakh beamed to the Soviet republics of Central Asia, broadcasts aimed at inflaming separatist sentiments and denouncing the Soviet Government with increasing intensity.

Where all this may ultimately end is hard to say. The Soviet Union now has something like thirty-eight divisions along the border, and close to another half-million guarding the Maritime Provinces, that strip of land stretching south along the coast and separated from the rich industrial areas of Manchuria by the Ussuri River, where the shooting occurred in 1969. These provinces are strategically vital to the Soviets; at their southern tip is Vladivostock, the port city at the end of the railroad, and possession of the area is essential for Soviet access to the Pacific. The maintenance of nearly a million men to protect vast empty Siberia against China is obviously an enormous drain on Soviet resources. Just why the

Kremlin has found it necessary to maintain such a massive deployment is a matter for speculation. But there is a considerable chance that the Soviets will, sooner or later, be tempted into a preventive strike against China's growing nuclear installations before the task becomes too costly and difficult—a strike aimed not merely at reducing the nuclear menace but also at teaching the Chinese a lesson. It is this hypothesis that best explains the enormous array of force along the border.

But if the Soviet Union is so preoccupied in the Far East, why should we not accept at face value her protestations of an intention to play a constructive role in the Western world? Here we must look more at facts than at words, since, even leaving aside the controversy as to parity or superiority in nuclear weapons, there is no doubt that, during recent times, the Soviet Union has improved its power position in relation to that of the West.

Obviously, the achievement most satisfying to the Kremlin has been to realize the ancient Czarist dream of making Russia a major Mediterranean power. Though Russian relations with Egypt are by no means as easy as the Soviet Union would like, nevertheless a significant Soviet military beachhead in the United Arab Republic is now an accomplished fact, and I see no realistic hope that Soviet power can be dislodged.

Of even greater concern to the West is Moscow's extraordinary concentration on building a major naval capability. Traditionally, nations that develop large navies are those with far-flung colonial possessions or substantial world trade. But the colonial possessions of the Soviet Union are limited to the land-locked states of its Eastern European empire, while its overseas trade is miniscule. Thus, the only explanation for the Soviets' almost obsessive desire to become a fish rather than an elephant must be found in its political and military ambitions.

Historically, Russia has extended its dominion through the power of its massive land army, but obviously this has restricted its expansion to those areas contiguous to Russian territory, or at least within the range of land lines of communication. Today the Soviet leaders apparently see in the development of a substantial navy the means whereby they can free themselves from this limitation, thus becoming able, for the first time, to extend their political influence into all areas of the globe.

It is this new prospect that gives a special importance to the Suez Canal, for once the Canal is reopened the Kremlin's ambition to extend Soviet influence would be greatly facilitated. It could increase its presence and influence at the mouth of the Red Sea, thus gaining a land bridge to the Horn of Africa where there are fruitful possibilities for mischief in the turbulent relations that prevail among the Somalis, the Eritreans and Ethio-

pians. Much more important, it could extend its presence and its subversive activities around the lower end of the Saudi Arabian peninsula, thus enabling it to play a spoiling role in the febrile politics of the Persian Gulf, and perhaps, at some point in the future, critically threaten the West's means of access to the greatest reservoir of energy in the world.

Yet ambitions even beyond this may be read from the indications that the Soviet Union intends to deploy permanently-based fleet units in the Indian Ocean. It is at this point that recent Soviet activity in the Subcontinent may take on a new significance. At some cost to its relations with its Arab friends, who have a common Islamic bond to Pakistan, the Soviet Union has greatly increased its influence in the second most populous nation in the world, India. Just what the Soviet Union hopes to accomplish by its new relations with Delhi is a question that has so far not been satisfactorily answered. Certainly Moscow paid substantial costs to consolidate its claim on the Indians. It was the Soviet veto in the Security Council that blocked United Nations action to rebuke the Indian advance, and in the General Assembly the Russians proved to be India's only stalwart friends when that body voted 104 to 11 against New Delhi.

Thus, the Indians find themselves at a critical point in their national life, heavily dependent on the support of their great, new friend, the Soviet Union. What reward can Moscow expect from this? Perhaps one or more naval bases, enabling the substantial building up of their fleet units in the Indian Ocean. Already there is a Soviet training mission for submarines at Vishakhapatnam and this could well be the nucleus of an installation like that at Mersa Matruh. For Indian neutrality is now another empty figure of speech, and a practical Indian-Soviet working alliance seems a likely possibility.

When these facts are added together—the extension of Soviet naval power throughout the major oceans of the world, its growing position in the Mediterranean and in the Arab world, and its newly developed strength in the Subcontinent—one gains the impression that the Soviet Union is far from relaxing into a passive role but is pursuing a systematic policy of extending its power and influence. Indeed, it seems to be pursuing a kind of Nixon Doctrine in reverse, acquiring forward bases and lengthening its military reach just when the United States is contracting its own.

From these facts one might well speculate that the relaxation of Soviet pressure on Western Europe is more a tactical measure than any profound or lasting abandonment of its desire to extend its influence toward the West. Determined to avoid a frontal collision with the United States over Western Europe, the one area of possible conflict that would almost certainly lead to nuclear war, and deterred by the vulnerability of its long land boundary

with China, the Soviet Union has chosen to turn a more benign face toward Western Europe, while channelling its power drive through the Mediterranean and the oceans of the world.

Reappraisals of America's Role

What makes this deflection of policy worth careful scrutiny by both Europe and America is the possibility that it stems from a careful Soviet calculation that its ambitions in Europe can be more effectively realized by relaxing pressure. To those of us who believe that the maintenance of a precarious power balance with Moscow is essential to the preservation of peace, the implications of such a tactic are necessarily disturbing. They raise a critical question: can the nations of Western Europe and the United States, now tied together through the Western Alliance, maintain effective unity of purpose once the Soviets smile rather than scowl? Particularly is this question relevant as a skeptical new generation moves toward the levers of power on both sides of the Atlantic, a generation to which the dangers of Soviet expansion have never been taught by experience and which is inclined to form its own judgments with little regard for the backdrop of history against which events are moving.

Let me begin with my own country, still suffering the toxic consequences of our tragic misadventure in Southeast Asia. The effect of that agonizing ordeal is still hard to assess with precision. To all Americans it has been a cautionary experience, leading many of them to conclude that they should never again intervene on any terrain far from their shores without the most searching appraisal of the strategic value of the area involved, the fundamental nature of the conflict, and the cost of thwarting the Communist thrust. But others would go much further, denouncing involvement indiscriminately wherever and under whatever circumstances it might be undertaken. This feeling is by no means limited to those under thirty. With the accumulation of troubles on the home front, there are increasing demands that America should narrow its horizons, withdraw its military presence from the outposts of the world, and abandon its efforts to maintain a power balance with Moscow.

With this numerous group the concept of a "balance of power" is for the moment almost out of fashion. Some echo the vague antimilitary sentiments fashionable in the 1930s; others have a Marxist bias. Yet they share a single sentiment: that America should resign its efforts to play a responsible world role. She should never have undertaken it. Nor have they let the past alone. Young revisionist historians are busily at work

denying the accepted bases for America's whole postwar policy. To them the Kremlin's power drive was never more than a fiction, never a serious political or military fact. It was, they maintain, a myth contrived by an earlier generation, collectively and derisively known as "Cold Warriors." One expression of this attitude is found in increasing pressure for the United States to withdraw its forces from Europe. Though few responsible American politicians have challenged the need to maintain our nuclear umbrella, many would leave the maintenance of Western defenses increasingly in European hands.

For any American Government to yield to these pressures would start a process that would be difficult to check. Once we began to bring home our ground forces, the next point of pressure would be the thinning out, or even the withdrawal, of the Sixth Fleet from the Mediterranean. There is no need to point out the implications of any move that would encourage the Soviet Union to believe it had substantial freedom of action in the Middle East without fear of American intervention. It would mean the effective isolation of Israel, and, in the long pull, the extension of Soviet hegemony throughout the southern littoral of the Mediterranean.

Let us come then to a point which seems little understood on this side of the ocean. Though the pressure to contract our American deployments stems in part from Vietnam and in part from our domestic problems, it tends to find expression in a growing resentment towards Europe. That the nations of Europe have made vast industrial progress in the postwar years is evident since today European enterprise is challenging the United States in all markets of the world. Were America as resilient and self-confident as in the past this would appear a healthy development, as it certainly is; but due largely to the frustrations of Vietnam we are undergoing a period of national uncertainty, a kind of generalized self-questioning, and this leads to querulousness, to suspicion, and to a narrowness of view. We see this dramatically in labor circles; for, as the labor movement has become more powerful and bureaucratic, it has at the same time become more parochial in its outlook; while many industrialists, having lost their traditional self-assurance, are following the time-honored course of blaming their troubles on foreigners.

Thus, feelings of friendship toward Europe are being somewhat soured by impatience, almost irascibility. Why, the question is asked, should the United States continue to try to maintain peace in the far reaches of the world when Western Europe thinks solely in terms of its own welfare. The Gross National Product of the ten countries that will become members of the enlarged European Economic Community is more than twice that of the Soviet Union. And if the Soviet Union is capable of playing a world

role, why should Western Europe stand modestly on only one corner of the stage? The response that Western Europe is not politically organized for such an effort is no longer persuasive. If the Europeans are capable of creating an effective trade bloc to compete with America, why can they not create effective political institutions to speak with a common voice and act with a common will on matters that touch its vital interests? It is a legitimate question that deserves a far better answer than Europe has given so far.

Need for Europe to Unite

Those of us concerned at the erosion of Trans-Atlantic confidence search for signs of encouragement. These we find principally in the decision of the French Government not to block the enlargement of the Community and the decision of London to accede to the Rome Treaty, decisions that together produce the most promising and exciting political events in many years. We cling to the belief that, once Britain accepts its role in Europe as an accomplished fact, the British will apply their pragmatic genius for building political institutions, not only toward shaping a structure that is economically integrated but one that is capable of acting with a unity of politcal purpose. I know of none of my countrymen who would not wish it were true, even though skeptical that events will evolve in that fashion.

No doubt Britain's decision to join Europe was a serious disappointment to Moscow, which assiduously works toward two objectives: to discourage all Western European moves toward unity and to generate pressures for the removal of the American presence and influence from Europe. It is with a consciousness of these Soviet objectives that many of us in America have watched with disquiet the Soviet agitation for a European Security Conference and the welcome accorded that proposal in some Western European circles. We have heard all the arguments in favor of such a conference—that it would not only complete and extend the effect of West Germany's bilateral treaties with Warsaw and Moscow in securing a status quo that could not be changed by force, but that it would also provide a chance for the Eastern European states to strengthen their bilateral lines to the West and to move further toward democratization and a loosening of the bonds in which Moscow has ensnared them. But such assumptions seem contrary to all the lessons of the past. The poignant stories of Budapest in 1956 and of Prague in 1968 have shown the Kremlin's implacable purpose to stamp out even the slightest flowering of either liberalism or national independence, and on the basis of experience one would

expect the West to show far more disarray at such a Conference than might be permitted the Eastern states.

Yet this American view has been scarcely heard in Europe, for we have grown exceedingly reticent in speaking our mind on what many regard as primarily European problems. The result is that though these events are carefully watched in America you have heard little approval of the enlargement of the Community, and only a few expressions of concern at the prospect of a European Security Conference. For a people with a habit of assertiveness, we Americans have, in the past few years, developed an uncharacteristic diffidence. We tend to shrink away from saying or doing anything that might be taken as undue interference in what is occurring on this side of the Atlantic. I strongly suspect we overdo it; since almost everything that happens in Europe has an actual or potential impact on America, just as Europe strongly feels the consequence of whatever America might do, either wise or foolish.

But though we keep silent and clearly lack consensus on many issues, there is one point on which dissent is almost never heard: that Europe must move with increasing urgency, not only toward economic, but also political unity. If the disaster of Vietnam has created agonizing problems for America, it has also left some useful by-products. One is to destroy any remaining illusion that America can be self-sufficient in this uneasy world village in which we all live. What the world needs sorely today is a strong European voice—independent, assertive, confident—that can speak with the full authority of a quarter of a billion people on the perplexing problems that we all face.

Thus it is, therefore, no accident that one rarely hears reference to a European-American partnership, a phrase that was so common in the 1960s. Implicit in that phrase was the concept of a relationship in which the United States would be the senior partner, providing the lead in both policy and action. But that is not the attitude of America today. What we want is for the world to feel the impact of the European personality, recognizing that the views expressed and actions taken by a united Europe would not be always in accord with the policies of Washington. That is as it should be, for, as we Americans have demonstrated to our own discomfiture, we have no monopoly of wisdom, and when we make mistakes they can be truly disastrous. I do not characterize this mood as humility but rather as a new and healthy realism. Yet that realism also leads us to have faith that our common civilization and common liberal traditions provide a sufficient congruence of interests and attitudes to assure that our general lines of policy on the most important matters would not be mutually defeating.

How then should one define the role of the new Europe as it emerges?

Quite clearly, as one of the major centers of power in the world, a political entity, continent-wide in scope, that possesses within its borders a large population, vast industrial power and substantial natural resources. Western Europe, tied together through some kind of confederal or federal system unquestionably has that potential, for it comprises a large and gifted population, rich lands, raw materials, a highly advanced technology and a powerful industrial plant. All that it lacks so far is political will, the determination of statesmen to break through the encrustations of history and habit and begin to think in more spacious and modern terms.

This is essential, not merely for the well-being, but, indeed, for the security of the whole West. A Europe that does not move forward to greater unity will be vulnerable and fragile—unable to resist mounting forces of fragmentation. For unquestionably, there will be an increase in the divisive efforts of the East, while the more astute Soviet tactic of a softer line may well encourage the re-emergence of those Western rivalries that have caused so much havoc in the past. At the top of any European agenda must be the modernization of political structures, in order that the rich talents of this great continent can be effectively utilized and that Europe can once more play that role in world affairs which is commensurate with its resources of intellect and power and material.

Conclusion

In addition, Americans and Europeans together must take steps to bring their institutions for common action more efficiently in accord with the requirements of the present day. In the past, it has been customary to think of such institutions primarily in a trans-Atlantic focus, providing a mechanism for resolving problems between the United States and Canada on one side of the ocean and the major powers of Europe on the other. But in this latter third of the twentieth century even that formulation is too parochial. For Japan has now taken its place among the economically advanced countries as the third industrial power, and this poses both a problem and an opportunity for Europe and America, for all the industrial powers working together. Only by the most close and sensitive cooperation can we find the ways and means to bring Japan, a nation with quite different history and institutions, a unique economic structure and distinctive habits of thought, into a full and easy participation in monetary and trading systems largely designed in response to Western experience. To succeed in this, we must firmly put aside the current practice of bilateral dealings that can result only in chaos and the erosion of Japanese

ties with the West. We must recognize not only the problems that Japan raises but the contribution it can make to all of us, provided only we broaden our conception of working relations within the community of industrialized nations.

All this will require imagination and a certain audacity, the willingness to break old molds and create new institutions, the kind of realism and statesmanship on the grand scale which the world still associates with Sir Winston Churchill.

Sechste Winston-Churchill-Gedenkvorlesung, gehalten an der Universität Zürich, 2. Februar 1972 (leicht gekürzte Fassung).

ALEXANDER KORAB

Moskau und Peking nach Nixons China-Besuch

Gesteigerte Rivalität

Seit dem China-Besuch des amerikanischen Präsidenten Nixon hat sich der sowjetisch-chinesische Konflikt verschärft. Die gegenseitige Polemik verläuft nicht mehr so eindeutig wie früher auf der ideologischen Bahn, sondern erfasst andere Gebiete. Das hängt vermutlich mit der Rückkehr Chinas in die internationale Arena zusammen und ist Ausdruck der Verärgerung Moskaus darüber, dass es Peking gelungen ist, die objektive und subjektive Isolierung zu durchbrechen. Im Vordergrund steht immer noch die Auseinandersetzung mit der These, dass durch die Annäherung zwischen den Vereinigten Staaten und der Volksrepublik China sich die Weltlage verändert habe. Sowjetische Kommentatoren lehnen diesen Standpunkt ab und versuchen, entgegen der übereinstimmenden Meinung ausserhalb des Ostblocks auf der These zu verharren, dass es nach wie vor ein bipolares Sonderverhältnis zwischen den Vereinigten Staaten und der Sowjetunion als zwei Supermächten gäbe und dass der spektakuläre Besuch Nixons in China diese Realität in keiner Weise verändert habe.