

Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

Johnson and Foreign Policy *Post 2/4/65*

THERE IS NO doubt something weird, and to many something disconcerting, in the quietness, which looks like passivity, of the Johnson foreign policy. There is a notion in the air that he does not know or care about foreign affairs and that this is why he refrains from striking pronouncements and urgent intervention in Europe, why also he refrains from trying to settle the affairs of Asia by confrontation to the point of war with North Viet-Nam and Red China. The feeling which this restraint produces is not unlike the silence after a long and loud and deafening noise.



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But as a matter of fact much has been happening in our foreign policy, and this is already visible in Europe. The President's decision during the autumn to relax the pressure for our proposal to create a multilateral nuclear force was quietly done. But it was a far-reaching decision. If it did not mean the end, it certainly foreshadowed the end of our postwar attitude towards the affairs of the European continent. During the years immediately after the war when Western Europe was defenseless and prostrate, there had been constructed an ideological framework for the Marshall Plan and NATO. In this ideological framework the image of the United States was that of the protector, the preserver, the guide and the leader of Europe.

THIS IMAGE has become completely out-of-date. It does not reflect the recovery of Western Europe or the detente in the Cold War which has existed since the Test Ban Treaty. But this notion of our European role is still part of the mental furniture of a very large number of

Americans who now feel angry or frustrated. They feel "defeated" because our European allies do not dance to the tune which the piper whom we used to pay used to play. In their view, if President Johnson did what he ought to do, he would make them resume the dance.

I count it an event of high policy to have recognized that this extravagant concern with European affairs will not work any longer, and does in fact act as a boomerang.

Not many people in this country realize how deeply and intimately we involved ourselves in postwar European affairs. That is why so many Americans do not appreciate the extent of anti-Americanism in Europe. There is a clandestine history which will no doubt someday be written about our interventions in European domestic affairs. It is enough to say now that, though our motives were high and the cause was good, once this meddling was no longer indispensable to the salvation of Europe, it became intolerable to Europeans.

AN ESPECIALLY annoying part of our superintending of Europe was our playing of favorites among our European allies. The special relationship with the British was, of course, an old one and is, I believe, enduring. But when, in our postwar zeal, we translated it into American pressure to promote British entry into the Common Market, we invited and we got General de Gaulle's resounding rebuff.

Even more mischievous has been the postwar special relationship with Adenauer's Germany. In the 1950s the old Chancellor was elevated by the State Department to the role of principal European adviser. This official deference to his prejudices resulted, I believe, in hardening the division of Germany and of Europe, and

of postponing the movement towards reunification which has at long last begun to get under way.

Our European policy has now been adjusted to the evolution of European affairs. Instead of trying to run Europe, or "lead" it, we are allowing the Europeans, who are fully recovered from the war, to sort out their own relations with one another. Instead of deepening the division of Europe, as we did in the years under Dr. Adenauer's domination of the State Department, we are encouraging and assisting that drawing together of the European peoples—of Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals"—which is the hope of the future.

AS COMPARED WITH Europe, the situation in Asia is far more threatening and far less promising. Though it should be possible to postpone and then to avoid a mortal confrontation with Red China, there is a possibility of it which we must always reckon with. I do not believe we can avoid a confrontation by precipitating it. And as long as we are entangled on the mainland of Asia, a confrontation with China would take place under the most unfavorable conditions for the United States. For we should have to choose between, on the one hand, a wanton massacre of Chinese by nuclear weapons and, on the other hand, fighting a war on the Asian continent against the Chinese masses.

In my view, our true power in the Pacific, which is unequalled and unquestioned, is diminished because we have become entrapped in a land war. Our true interest, then, is to negotiate a settlement which releases us from the trap and frees us, as the paramount power on the sea and in the air throughout the Pacific, to work towards a general settlement in Asia.