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Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

U.S. Influence in Europe

WE ARE SEEING brisk activity in European affairs. It has been aroused by General de Gaulle's decision to evict the NATO military establishment from France, to withdraw the French troops in Germany from the integrated command, and by his impending visit to the Soviet Union. All this can be viewed as the beginning of a systematic campaign to abrogate American leadership in Europe and to reduce drastically American influence in European affairs. General de Gaulle himself has frequently said that this is one of his purposes.

But there is another way of viewing the situation, and it is, I believe, more realistic and it might lead to more constructive conclusions. It is that while General de Gaulle does indeed have the initiative today, he has it by default. He has the initiative by virtue of American inability and unreadiness and unwillingness to exercise leadership in Europe, now that the postwar era is ending. Only when we look at the situation in this perspective can we understand how France, which is not a very great power by contemporary standards, has such political predominance in the Western Alliance.

THE CENTRAL purpose of the Gaullist enterprise is to make an opening to the East and to bring about a relief of tension, an increase of economic and cultural intercourse, and an end to the cold war between the Soviet Union and western Europe. The moral influence of General de



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Gaulle in Europe is far greater than France's military and economic power, and the reason for this is that the General has identified himself with what, for the rising generation of Europeans, is the wave of the future. They do not like or agree with all of his ideas, his tactics or his manners, and there is very widespread opposition to a too-powerful France. But General de Gaulle is going in the direction in which the Europeans want to go, and which they believe is the way to peace in Europe, to expanding trade and prosperity, and to the elimination of the most dangerous situation in Europe, the partition of Germany.

Although our officials would in theory agree with most of these European aspirations, the American Government is not, for a variety of reasons, identified with the European feeling that the time has come to bring the postwar era to an end. It is a fact that the men who have shaped and are shaping U.S. policy in Europe are the veterans, many of them the distinguished veterans, of the cold war. They do not speak convincingly to the rising generation of Europeans who have no memories of the World War and its aftermath. In many critical circumstances they cannot even speak with their contemporaries in western Europe.

This is an intellectual default which makes us unable to exercise leadership in Europe today. But there is another reason, a more obstinate reason, why American influence in Europe has fallen so low. It is that the Vietnamese war has made us unable to act in Europe by negotiating with the other great power, the Soviet Union. If it were not for the Vietnamese entanglement, more precisely if we were not attacking North Viet-

nam, the United States could play its natural role of counterpart to the Soviet Union in the great negotiations which Europeans now desire.

WE CAN BE reasonably certain that without the United States playing the part which it ought to be playing, there can be no really far-reaching and permanent settlement of European problems. For that, the participation of the United States as well as the U.S.S.R. is necessary. But for the time being we are not really present in Europe and we are not able to talk with the Soviet Union. By failing to grasp the intellectual and moral changes that have come with the end of the postwar era and the departure of the war generations, we have shut down our communication with contemporary Europe. Because of our military preoccupation with Southeast Asia we cannot fulfill our indispensable role in the European settlement, which is to be in the West the counterpart of the Soviet Union in the East. We have, moreover, confirmed by our actions, by the character and scope of our military deployment in Southeast Asia, one of General de Gaulle's prime arguments, which is that the United States is no longer vitally interested in Europe, and that our vital interests now lie in the other continents.

How long it will take to bring the Vietnamese entanglement to an end, and how long it will take before our European policy is in the hands of new men with fresh minds, it is impossible to guess. But we can be certain that our political influence in Europe is greatly diminished today and that more and more the Europeans are trying to act accordingly.