

Post 1/2/67

Today and Tomorrow . . .

By Walter Lippmann

Two Leading Authorities

IN ITS SUBSTANCE the Consular Convention with the Soviet Union, which is now up for ratification by the Senate, is of relatively minor practical significance. All it would do is make trade and tourist travel between the two countries safer and more convenient. It has no real relation to the question of espionage. But because of the opposition to it, including that of the Director of the FBI, the ratification of this convention has been blown up into a test of whether or not the United States can proceed to work out better relations with the Soviet Union.

The contest over ratification turns on a question of great importance to the whole conduct of U.S. foreign policy. It is whether international communism is still essentially the same conspiracy which it was understood to be 20 years ago after World War II. The hard opponents of the Consular Convention believe that the Soviet Union today is no different than it was in the time of Lenin or Stalin. The hard proponents of the escalated war in Vietnam believe that the real adversary is the international communism of the postwar era.

THIS WEEK the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has heard testimony on these questions from two

distinguished diplomats and scholars. The first was George Kennan who is generally regarded as the leading American authority on Soviet communism. The second witness was Edwin Reischauer, until recently our Ambassador to Japan, who has known the Far East all his life.

Kennan told the Senate Committee that the 24-year-old pictures of communism was no longer a true picture. Reischauer told the Committee that the current official conception of our relations with Asia is mistaken, both as to the power and the threat of China and as to the power and influence of the United States.

IF KENNAN and Reischauer are right, then a successful foreign policy cannot be formed in this country until there has been a re-education of our people, starting with our officials.

"Many of us would be helped in our thinking about the problems of Soviet-American relations," said Kennan, "if we could free ourselves from the abnormal sensitivities and reflexes to which the extreme tensions of earlier decades have led and teach ourselves to think about Russia as simply another great world power with its own interests and concerns, often necessarily in conflict with our own but not tragically so — a power different in many respects, but perhaps no longer in essential ones, from what Russia would have been had there been no Communist revolution in that country 50 years ago.

REISCHAUER'S testimony was deeply at variance with the current official conception of our role in Asia. He told the Committee that "we should seek to minimize our military involvement and military commitments in Asia." In saying this he was adhering to the classic American doctrine of no land war on the Asian continent, which was breached by President Kennedy and completely abandoned by President Johnson and Secretary Rusk.

As against Secretary Dulles and Secretary Rusk, Reischauer said "we should not try to induce most Asian countries to align themselves formally with us."

He said "we should not sponsor political, social, or economic change in Asian countries, though we should be responsive to requests from them for aid . . . We run serious and unwarranted dangers when we take the initiative in sponsoring important internal changes in Asian lands or when our influence becomes so preponderant that we assume responsibility for the existence or nature of a regime."

THESE ARE weighty utterances which cannot easily be dismissed. They should not be ignored and every effort must be made to acquaint our people with them. For it would be impossible to name any two living Americans who can speak with greater or even with comparable authority about the problems confronting us with the Soviet Union and with the countries of Asia.

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