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Today and Tomorrow By Walter Lippmann

This Ornerly World

IT IS possible to draw up a fairly long list of situations in the world where things are not going as we would like them to go. Our foreign policy is running into great difficulties, and these failures and frustrations provide plenty of material to complain about.



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Thus, we are not persuading others to follow us in boycotting China and Cuba, nor in the partial boycott on commercial credits to the Soviet Union. We are not being followed in our NATO policy, be it in the build-up of conventional forces, the abandonment of national nuclear forces, or the substitution of multilateral nuclear forces. The policy of insisting that the Chinese government in Formosa is the government of all China is very near to collapse, and there looms ahead the prospect of the recognition by the United Nations of Red China as "China." More than that, there is now the distinct possibility that Japan, as well as Germany, will be drawn into much closer contact with Red China.

We are compelled to engage ourselves reluctantly in the problems which result from the final liquidation of the British empire in Cyprus, in East Africa, and in the South Seas. But though we are engaged, our influence in all these trouble spots is far from being decisive. Our entanglement in Southeast Asia is such that we are faced increasingly with what President Eisenhower once called the choice between the unattainable victory and the unacceptable peace. Nor are our prospects very

bright in Latin America . . . the list of our troubles could be extended.

CONFRONTED with so many frustrations and failures, the automatic reaction is to exaggerate their significance—"we are being defeated all over and are on the road to war." And then to look for the devil who is conspiring to destroy us. Maybe, for example, it is General de Gaulle? But the sensible way is to recognize the truth, which is that the orneriness of the world in which we now live is both natural and normal in human experience. It is unnatural and abnormal to suppose that the whole world will conform to what we would like it to be. It is a good sign that President Johnson is not in a state of anxiety bordering on panic because we are being opposed in so many places. For the truth is that we are being forced by the evolution of world conditions to grow up faster than is convenient and comfortable.

I would not take this view of the troubled surface of affairs if it were not the fact that in the depths, where the ultimate power is, there is a much greater calm. The crucial threat of thermonuclear war has been neutralized and has subsided. Barring a wildly irrational turn in the government of the Soviet Union or the United States, say towards unilateral disarmament or towards jingo recklessness, the threat of nuclear war is not likely to be resumed until the time—which is still distant—when Red China has become a nuclear power with its own weapons and a delivery system.

THE basic trouble with our foreign policy today is, as I see it, that the State Department is grinding out

so many policies on unexamined premises. Take, for example, the boycott policies against China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. These policies are breaking down because our best and closest allies just will not fall in with them. They run counter to their interests and their ways of looking at the world.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that the State Department is stifling any searching re-examination of its assumptions upon which these boycott policies rest. In part it is, I think, still brainwashed from the McCarthy terror, in part it is intimidated by what might be said in Congress, in part it is convinced by years of repetition. Yet the boycotts do not work because they rest on false premises—chief among them that the United States is still, as it was in the postwar period from 1945 to 1955, the possessor of a monopoly of the military and disposable financial power of the whole globe.

The Johnson Administration has inherited a collection of policies about Europe, Asia, and Latin America which rest on premises that have not been re-examined since the postwar period came to an end in the last years of the Eisenhower Administration. It is not easy, to be sure, as a matter of practical politics and public relations to re-examine premises which have become sanctified and untouchable because once upon a time, in the critical days of the cold war, they were right.

Nevertheless, the price of not re-examining the premises and of readjusting ourselves to the world we actually live in will be continuing failures and frustrations in all the continents.