

*East-West*

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DISENGAGEMENT: TWO VIEWS

A discussion between Mr. Richard Lowenthal  
and Mr. G. F. Hudson on February 21, 1958

In the diplomatic exchanges that are now being conducted on the approaches to the summit, one of the central problems and one of the intractable problems probably is the problem posed by the partition of Europe. And I think the best way of approaching the nature of that problem is to remember that an almost interminable problem was created by the particular way in which Europe was partitioned at Yalta and afterward. The agreement of Yalta was in essence a military agreement -- an agreement about military demarcation lines between the liberating Allied armies. And the powers realized, I think perhaps not cynically, but quite realistically, that in the nature of things, when two great super-powers divide a continent into military spheres, that means also to some extent political spheres of influence. The trouble was that by political spheres of influence Western powers and Russians mean very different things. The Western statesmen had in mind what spheres of influence have always meant in modern history -- a kind of gradual shading over of the influence from one power to another.

The Russians meant that a sphere of influence was a Communist controlled sphere and the friendly government to which they were entitled in the neighboring countries meant a Communist government. This is their way of seeing things.

There has been much controversy since as to whether the Yalta agreement has been broken by the Russians or kept. Of course, everything which refers to free elections and things like that has been broken, but the military line of demarcation has been kept. It has been kept because it was, as some people have called it, a self-enforcing agreement -- a kind of agreement behind which there are built-in sanctions. Now that applies from the Russian point of view as well as from the Western point of view. While this agreement has been kept in the military sense, it has of course given rise to profound uneasiness on all sides. It has given rise to the suffering of the peoples of Eastern Europe. It has given rise to Russian uneasiness about the fact of Western military bases, American bases, on the Western part of the continent and about the fact of Western refusal to accept the Sovietization of Eastern Europe as final. It has given rise, therefore, to an essentially politically unstable state.

In the present exchanges preparing the summit meeting, both sides have more or less made clear what they want to do about it. When you ask what are the Russians' objectives in the summit meeting with regard to Europe, they have two objectives plainly visible: the one is military -- that they want to get the American troops and bases out of Western Europe if they can, and if they can't get that, they want at the very least a guarantee that no atomic weapons will be stockpiled in Western Germany, that no atomic missile bases will be created there, and no atomic weapons will fall into Western German hands. The reasons are pretty obvious. In the political sphere, the Russians want a confirmation of the status quo of their rule of Western Europe.

I talked yesterday about the way in which the Russian policy in Eastern Europe has toughened lately and in which the desire for autonomy within the Communist parties is being sat upon and part of the explanation for this, as is shown very clearly in the East German case in Ulbricht's latest purge, is the preparation for the summit meeting; the Russian idea that they want a solid front on the eve of these talks; they want a solid backing for their desire to consolidate the status quo. One of Ulbricht's accusations against Schirdewan is that he (allegedly) wanted German unity



at any price. That is most unlikely, but it is likely that Herr Schirdewan wanted German unity at some price. Herr Ulbricht wanted German unity at no price. He does not want any talk about this awkward subject at the present time and that's what he's about.

So the Russian objectives, very clearly, are to change the military status quo by getting the West out, or at the very least, to prevent the West from having the military status quo logically followed up by atomic armaments in Europe. Secondly, to consolidate the political status quo of the partition of Europe and of Communist control of Eastern Europe. The two objectives are very clearly incompatible from a Western point of view. The one asks us to make a major concession; the other promises to give us nothing in return. The Russians, in fact, are wanting something for nothing and the diplomatic form which is a kind of nothing for something has taken the form of the Rapacki plan. The Rapacki plan asks us to renounce atomic armaments in Western Germany, knowing perfectly well - as the Russians must know - that in the long run American troops will not stay in Germany if they are denied the normal armaments for which they are organized and which are necessary to face the Russian numerical superiority. At the same time, the plan offers politically nothing in return; it offers no Russian withdrawal from the East European countries; it offers consolidation of the status quo.

Now that illogical, but politically (from the point of view of Russian interest) consistent program, is the Russian position. What is the Western position? The Western position is that the Russians should negotiate on German unity and on the freedom of the peoples of Eastern Europe. That is, that they should be willing to change the political status quo of the partition of Europe. But at the same time, the Western powers do not wish to negotiate about the military status quo. We do not wish in any circumstances to withdraw American bases from Western Europe or Western Germany, and so on. In other words, the Western powers, too, want something for nothing and because they too want something for nothing, they are not in a position tactically or propagandistically to exploit the situation.

But for this kind of bluff -- to demand something which you know you can't get is bluff -- the Western powers are less well equipped because there is a critical opinion in the Western powers and it is becoming very clear to that critical opinion that these objectives -- consolidation of the military status quo and change of the political status quo -- are not compatible and are not obtainable. So we must assume that the Western powers in pursuing these incompatible and unattainable objectives really have something else in mind. And I think it is quite clear what they have in mind. They have in mind that the present status quo on both sides - military and political - bad as it is, is better than any conceivable obtainable alternative.

The real inner thought of the Western chancelleries in Washington and London, Paris and Bonn, is that the partition of Europe and the partition of Germany is a great pity but that a situation in which Eastern Europe would get a chance of self-liberation at the price of an unstable, unclear military situation in Europe, such as might arise after the withdrawal of troops, would be worse because it would contain a danger of spontaneous combustion of war. So the real Western position is that it is better to keep the status quo than make the only conceivable major change. Now that is a position which contains one tremendous weakness, because Europe is in one part of the world where the forces of social change, of popular

and of ideological current are in favor of the West -- in favor of freedom. That is, unfortunately, not the case in large parts of Asia and Africa. We can expect the popular pressures to work against the Russians in Europe and particularly in Eastern Europe. If we come to the conclusion that for military reasons we have nevertheless to keep the status quo in Europe as a lesser evil, we get into the situation where we co-exist with the Russians in sitting on the lid in the one area where the forces of spontaneous change would be in our favor. That is an extremely unsatisfactory situation. In fact, it is a paralyzing situation and it explains the extreme unease with which the Western chancelleries are looking forward to the summit talks.

The policy of disengagement, which we are to discuss today, is a proposal for an alternative Western policy -- a proposal for getting out of this dilemma in which both sides demand something for nothing -- a proposal for getting directly back to Yalta, and replacing the partition line of Yalta by two new lines -- by having, instead of a single line between Eastern and Western Europe, through the center of Europe two lines giving a Western military bloc on one side, a Soviet military power on the other side and a neutral belt in between. It is essential to this proposal that the two new lines should be as precise and as guaranteed as the one older line was. In other words, that there should be the same built-in military sanctions against anybody militarily crossing the line. If these military sanctions do not exist -- if they are not sure -- then the objections are overwhelming and the whole project falls to the ground.

How can you have in the present world a neutral area which is effectively guaranteed? There are obviously a few conditions which do not consist simply in writing a guarantee on paper. The first condition is that the countries in that neutral area, which, according to the proposals now discussed by some of the British press, and for instance by the British leader of the opposition, Mr. Gaitskell, as well as by a number of other people in the West, should comprise the whole of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary at least, that these countries must have conventional forces of their own strong enough not to defend themselves effectively against an all-out Russian attack, which is impossible because of their size, but to give battle sufficiently not to be overrun without a serious war. In other words, no guarantee is operative unless it is a clear casus belli. A clear casus belli cannot be established by an unarmed country, and an unarmed country can almost always be bullied into surrender without open aggression. You must have effective conventional forces at the frontier, not just a kind of militia at the crossroads as Kennan said in his talks -- you must have a real conventional force. You must, at the same time, have a limitation of this force in such a way as to minimize the risk of internal troubles arising between the countries in this belt. You must have some control - international control - against atomic armament of these countries which could be a pilot scheme for the general question of preventing atomic armament of fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh powers.

And thirdly, you must have the bases and some forces of the great powers of the West - of the United States - within effective range for implementing the guarantee. And if you must have American bases on this side of the Atlantic, you must have, in my opinion, at least some American troops on this side of the Atlantic. Without that, the guarantee would be a paper guarantee. I do not think you need the six divisions which are now stationed in Western Germany; you need some troops which can take part in any local clash immediately. These, I think, are the military preconditions of any idea of a neutral belt.



What are the political preconditions? I do not think we need a political agreement on German free elections or anything of this kind. Firstly, I always doubt that one can agree with the Russians on the interpretation of a political agreement. Secondly, I believe that the moment the Russian troops are not only withdrawn, but that there is a guarantee against their return, the problem of the East German regime, as with some of the other East European regimes, would solve itself. I think it indeed likely in case the Russians should one day -- and that will not be easy -- in case the Russians should one day agree to a military withdrawal with guarantees -- that in such a case they themselves would make moves to speed the transition, to smooth the transition in order to prevent a situation in which revolutions break out all over the place and the Ulbrichts hang from the nearest lamppost -- to make sure that instead the regime is changed to some extent, and is made a little more respectable before they get out, so that some negotiation then becomes possible. If the Russians one day -- and that will not be easy -- should be ready for that kind of move, we should help them. We should allow them to save face -- we are not interested in inflicting visible defeat on them, we are interested in liberating Eastern Europe.

Another political condition which is more important is that there should be clearly defined frontiers within this area. Obviously, a withdrawal of the major powers from this area while the problem of the German-Polish frontier is diplomatically unsolved, is impossible. If the negotiation ever is to succeed on the question of a withdrawal, the question of the frontier will have to be settled at the same time. In other words, there will have to be the rudiments at least of a German peace treaty guaranteed at the same time as the withdrawal.

I do not think that there are any other political conditions except one thing -- we should not agree to political conditions about the internal structure of any of these countries in the future. Any attempt to safeguard what the Russians call the socialist achievements and so on by international guarantee must of course be rejected on the grounds of the sovereignty of these nations. Some of the things which the Russians call socialist achievements may be liked by some of us; others may be disliked by all of us. But that is neither here nor there. It is not a question for the Russians, the Americans and the great powers to decide what the internal structure of these countries is to be. The whole point is that they can determine the future themselves.

The last issue I want to take up is what are the reasons why this kind of change -- this liquidation of Yalta -- this creation of a free neutral belt in Europe -- should be accepted by the Russians. If it is surrounded by the kind of conditions which I have put forward, quite clearly far more in our interest than in theirs, it is quite obvious that it is contrary to the objectives which the Russian leaders have consistently proclaimed for some time. In other words, it is not a proposal for getting a relaxation of tension with the Russians by making concessions to them; it is a proposal for pressing them back by a different method than has been followed so far. Why should this different method be more successful? I can see three factors which might, not in the short run, but after some time of pressure, cause the Russians to give in to such pressure. The first and smallest perhaps but a very persistent one is Russia's economic manpower problem. The Russians are at the moment forced to keep a number of garrisons in Eastern Europe which are larger than would be required for purely military reasons. Purely militarily speaking, Eastern Europe has some bases, it has some value to them, but they don't need as many divisions there militarily speaking as they now have in Eastern Germany or

in Hungary. They need these divisions to hold down the people. The Russians would like to be able to withdraw some of them. They would like to have our guarantee of the status quo in Eastern Europe in order to be able to withdraw them -- they would like an agreement about the thinning out of garrisons and so on. It is my conviction that thinning out in that sense would not be a step toward disengagement, but the contrary of disengagement. The only kind of disengagement in which we are interested is one in which the Russians lose the right to keep troops in these countries. But if we insist on not letting them out, so to speak, unless they go out altogether, we have an economic pressure because they do want to save some of these troops.

The second point is their fear of the atomic armament of West Germany. It is not so much a question of our atomic bases in West Germany, whether they are a little nearer or a little further, whether they are in Western Germany or in Britain doesn't matter a very great deal to them, as it doesn't matter a very great deal to us -- but it does matter to them that if the present armament race goes on in the present way, sooner or later the West Germans will get atomic weapons too. That is in the logic of things. If the American and British troops in Germany are armed with atomic weapons -- if the whole defense of Western Germany is organized for the use of tactical atomic weapons, sooner or later the West Germans will insist on getting them too. It's quite inevitable and it is a thing which the Russians understandably don't like. It is a form of pressure of some value.

The third pressure is that the mere fact of the West raising the banner of disengagement will, in my opinion, create more hope among the people of Eastern Europe and hence the increase of pressure from those peoples makes it still more difficult for the Russians to keep many troops there. And, finally, it increases the risk which we don't like, but which the Russians like even less, of new risings in Eastern Europe. You know that after Hungary a lot of people asked what would happen if next year or after two years there's a rising in Eastern Germany? Nobody in the West had an answer to this; nobody in Russia has an answer to it either. Of course, the Russians can put it down, but what if there are armed West German troops at the frontier and refugees are streaming over chased by the Red Army? Nobody can know. And the fact that -- whatever the West German government may say, nobody can know -- the Russians can't know is a factor of pressure. It is a factor which makes the present situation as dangerous for them as for us. Because of these factors, which I have enumerated now, I believe that it is possible, not that the Russians like these proposals -- I'm absolutely sure that they don't like them -- but that it is possible that by persistent pressure we may eventually get them to accept them. It is a program not for getting immediate agreement at the pending summit conference; it is a program for changing the character of our long-term campaign in a way which, in my opinion, is more promising.



I think I would like to start my side of the argument from where Mr. Lowenthal left off and that is on the Soviet side of this question.

Two proposals have come from the Soviet side; one for disengagement, the wholesale disengagement, which I will call the Khrushchev plan, and the other, which is really not disengagement but rather local partial disarmament, the Rapacki plan. Both of these are initiatives from the side of the Soviet bloc so that one can take it that unless they are pure propaganda, there is a desire on the Soviet side to alter the present state of affairs. But if we look at it from here, we ask two questions.

First of all, what would probably, of course no one can predict with any certainty on these subjects, but what would probably be the results in Eastern Europe if all Soviet troops were to be withdrawn within the frontiers of the Soviet Union and there were to be convincing guarantees that they would not return?

And secondly, what is the minimum political interest of the Soviet Union as a Communist dictatorship in Eastern Europe? Now you may answer this question in various ways according to your interpretation of what evidence there is, but I would suggest that in at least one of the countries which is now under communist rule, that rule would be overthrown. And by that I do not mean that there would be a change of leadership within the ruling Communist Party, but that the rule of the Communist Party itself would be overthrown which is, in fact, what did happen in Hungary for a few days in the autumn of 1956.

I emphasize this difference, at least in my view, between so-called national Communism and the overthrow of a Communist regime, because in my opinion what happened in Poland and what happened in Hungary were quite different, although there are many people, at any rate in England, who commonly talk of them as if they were the same. In Poland, the rule of the Communist Party has continued. One may very strongly prefer Mr. Gomulka to his predecessors in the leadership of the Polish Communist Party, but nevertheless, it is a continuation of Communist rule. What happened in Hungary was a complete collapse of the Communist Party and if it had not been for the Russian military intervention, there would have been no more Communist rule in Hungary. Hungary would have become, I feel certain, some sort of democratic state -- rather on the lines of Austria, because the Party definitely had disintegrated, the police were in flight and in hiding, and the Army, such as it was, had gone over to the rebels. That was an overthrow of the regime and I believe that the Russians from their point of view (I'm speaking of course of the present rulers of Russia) had to intervene. And the reason why I believe this is that I think that the Soviet Union cannot go back to a situation of Communism in one country -- that the expansion which took place after the war is now something which it is essential for the regime in Moscow to maintain, because any collapse of the Communist regime in Eastern Europe today would, I believe, produce a chain reaction which would involve the Soviet Union itself. And I believe on ideological grounds that an essential part of basic Marxist-Leninist belief is that the Communist revolution is the inevitable historic trend of the age which may be held up for long periods, during which of course peaceful co-existence may be necessary, but cannot be reversed in any country where Communism has once been firmly established. Because if the Communist government is over-

thrown by popular vote, not externally, if Communism is in retreat, then -- the whole of this mystique is destroyed -- this idea that time is on your side, that you are part of a great historic force, which must always be advancing. And I believe that the Soviet regime depends fundamentally on this kind of prestige -- that more and more the evidence is of unrest in the Soviet Union, particularly among the younger generation, the Party must justify itself -- it must stand evermore and more on this basis of a historic mission of historic necessity.

Now if that is so and of course, you may challenge me on that... if that is so, then I don't believe that the Soviet Union can afford to take its forces out of Eastern Europe if it also at the same time makes up its mind that it will never go back. Because -- unless the men in the Kremlin believe that these regimes are strong enough to take care of themselves, and personally, after what's happened in the last three years, I find it quite incredible that they should believe that -- I think they are well aware of the dependence of these governments on either the presence of Soviet troops or the availability of Soviet forces from across the frontier if they should be threatened. In either case, the Soviet government will refuse a disengagement agreement even though it may advocate it for propaganda purposes -- or it will make its consent dependent on conditions which would then seriously weaken the capacity of the West to act in Europe and would largely nullify the guarantees and hence weaken both the military capacity and the political will of the West. If the Soviet Union were to reckon that whatever the guarantees on paper, in fact it would probably not have to face serious interference if it did subsequently intervene in Europe to support Communist regimes, or in the case of Germany even to extend them, then, of course, such an agreement would be of the greatest advantage to the Soviet Union, or at least Khrushchev might think so.

Now if we look at these schemes concretely, let us start with the Khrushchev plan of which the clearest enunciation was in his television broadcast in America last year when, if you remember, he said: "If you will withdraw all your troops in Europe, we will withdraw our troops within the frontiers of the Soviet Union and you will then see that the Kadar regime in Hungary will flourish for ages to come." Of course, some people took the boast as meaning that Khrushchev knows very well that it's not going to happen and that, therefore, he needn't worry about the future of the Kadar regime. But he may also have thought if the Americans were to withdraw all their troops and bases from Europe, the capacity then for the West to counter any intervention that he might make in Europe is so much reduced that that is a chance that may be very well worth taking. Because, after all, if the Russians withdraw, not only from East Germany but also from Poland and Hungary, they only go back to their own frontier and there is a very large plain -- an area of level ground from Brest-Litovsk to the North Sea -- and with modern mechanized troops that space can be covered in a very short time.

On the other hand, once the United States has withdrawn all its forces across the Atlantic, its re-entry into Europe would be a matter of great difficulty because the sea still is a great obstacle to military movement. And I assume that if the Americans went out of the continent of Europe, the British troops, such as they are, would go too. In fact, there would be nothing left in Europe militarily speaking except the present European members of NATO -- the continental countries of Europe which at present day do not have very strong conventional forces and do not possess atomic weapons.



Now the plan which was produced by Mr. Healy, a Labor member of Parliament in Britain, which has been more or less adopted officially now by the British Labor Party and which is a plan like Mr. Lowenthal's too, is that there should not be such a complete withdrawal from Europe by the American and British forces, but that we should remain in some strength on the continent; that is that they should move back, if disengagement were to cover Germany, to France and the Low Countries. This would preserve a balance of power not unlike what exists at present, i.e., the Russians would withdraw to the East and the Western forces would withdraw to the West and then you would have your neutral belt in between.

But even if it's admitted that the relations of the total military forces of the Soviet Union and of the West would remain more or less the same, there would still be a very large question as to the real commitment which would be involved. Any military alliance or guarantee has two kinds of effects: its deterrent effect on a country which might contemplate aggression and the effect of confidence it produces in the members of the alliance who are threatened, or a guaranteed country which is threatened.

Now I think the fact of the development of nuclear weapons is, in democratic countries and in countries where any action has been taken on a coalition basis with consultation between several governments, to make for extreme hesitation in taking action which may, or perhaps initially will, involve strategic nuclear warfare. The only conditions under which I believe that governments would resort to full-scale war are either that the countries possessing all kinds of modern nuclear weapons are confronted with a direct attack on their own territory or a direct attack on their own forces.

Now the great guarantee as I see it, and the situation of the status quo as it is at present, is the fact that American and British forces are committed; they are committed in a way in which the response is automatic. Any Soviet move across the border into Western Germany would automatically involve hostilities with Britain and America and that is something entirely different from those countries having, after consultation with their allies, to make up their minds as to what they would do about some perhaps rather local and ambiguous moves in certain parts of Europe after a disengagement of forces. I think guarantees of that sort would not be a really convincing deterrent to the Soviet Union if its leaders were inclined to produce and to follow an adventurous policy and I'm inclined to think that as the regime becomes less stable, which I believe it will in the near future, the policy will also tend to become more adventurous, unless the risks are too high. Then, the deterrent would not be the equivalent of what it is now because there would always be the hope that, well, they won't in fact do anything. And equally, the confidence inspired by these guarantees in the people who would be protected by it would also be weakened because they would not feel sure that the guarantee would apply and therefore they would tend, especially if the Soviet Union were getting tough, to submit or at any rate temporize with Soviet aggressive policy.

Now I'm afraid this sounds like a rather pessimistic view about guarantees but I'm a historian and I'm afraid that modern history is littered with broken treaties and guarantees that have not worked. And I think that simply as a matter of the protection of Europe, this would apply to Western Europe too if we once got large-scale disengagement. There would be a very large area then at stake -- larger than

the present Soviet sphere. You would have a zone of uncertainty -- a zone which I believe would inevitably be unstable for some period, because I can't see the countries concerned after all that's happened, evolving smoothly into new political forms. I think that simply as a matter of expectation I would expect the danger of war to be greater than it is now. And disengagement seems to me to be advocated for two reasons, from what I've heard from people in my own country in general conversation. First of all, it would reduce the danger of war and secondly, it would enable the Communist-governed countries of Eastern Europe to free themselves. Well, as I've tried to argue, I don't believe the second one and therefore, I don't believe the first either. And this does not mean that I advocate - or at least that I believe in - the permanence - the indefinite permanence - of the status quo in Europe or that I take an attitude of despair with regard to the countries of Eastern Europe which are now under Soviet domination.

What I do believe is that the vital changes to which we must look are to come in the Soviet Union itself and that without that there cannot be any real change in Eastern Europe; that such changes will come about without our being able to do anything about it, but that one thing we can do is not to give the Soviet regime unnecessary political successes or to increase the area in which it can conduct dangerous political and military manoeuvres. I'm aware that from the point of view of propaganda and policy, it is very difficult to stand on our present policy. I quite agree with what Mr. Lowenthal said -- that there is a great deal of unrest and uneasiness in Western countries and particularly in my own at present -- a feeling that the present policy is not getting anywhere -- that it's negative, that it's a policy of despair, that there is no positive approach and that all the propaganda advantage now is going to the Soviet side because they keep on whipping forward these proposals like the Rapacki plan. I would therefore, I think, agree that to some extent we should modify our policy -- I think in particular that we ought to drop the claim that the reunified Germany should have the option of belonging to NATO. For one thing, we're not at all sure that the reunified Germany would want to belong to NATO. I think that neutrality might be very attractive to many Germans. At any rate, that is a claim which is so obviously to the military disadvantage of the Soviet Union that many people, quite reasonably, I think, say well, if you go on with this demand, it shows you really don't want an agreement because it's something which obviously the Russians would never agree to. But I think that we should stand very firmly on unification of Germany through free elections because this is a valid testing point for the Russians and it is a matter of principle on which we don't think the West can or should compromise.

One hears talk, for example, that if there was to be reunification, East Germany should have a separate electoral law. Ideas of that kind are simply meant to allow the present regime in East Germany to continue to have the advantage of being part of the Federation while at the same time being completely independent of it. I don't think that we should compromise on this issue. On the contrary, I think we should make it the central issue. I think that if there are going to be summit talks, the West should take the offensive on its own principles -- and of course, this applies to the other Eastern European countries as well, but it applies particularly to Germany, not because free elections are more important in East Germany than in Poland or Czechoslovakia or Hungary, but because Germany, as a divided country, is essentially an international question, whereas of course the Russians can always make the defense with the other countries that these are internal problems. We must insist that



the reunification of Germany is not an internal problem of Germany; it is a problem for the four powers and we can, I think, develop a positive policy of the settlements which we require before this disengagement. Because disengagement is largely talked about as a preliminary -- this was very clear in the interview of Gomulka which was published in the London Times a couple of days ago in which Gomulka firmly rejected the idea that the Rapacki plan had anything to do with German reunification -- he simply said that this would reduce tension and, therefore, it would make reunification easier in the future.

That is the line which I think the West must reverse -- we must turn the whole thing around -- we are seeking a political situation in which disengagement will be safe -- in fact, I would say almost superfluous, because if we should once get the political settlement in Europe, then international tension would be so far reduced that it would come almost of itself.

I've talked rather a long time, but I've been invited as the devil's advocate and my task was to throw cold water on other people's hopes. I'm afraid this is not really a task I relish, but it is my belief that disengagement without prior political settlement in Europe would create dangers greater than there are in the present situation.

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Rebuttal by Mr. Lowenthal

I'm a little surprised to find that the differences between Mr. Hudson and myself really boil down to different analyses of Russia rather than anything else. In two ways: first he seems to expect that in a situation where neutrality is guaranteed but where the guarantee hasn't got the additional sanction of American troops being in the guaranteed area as hostages, the Russians will take the risk, that they will take the gamble, and that rather than put up with the political defeat, they will gamble on a world war in the hope that it may not happen. I can quite see that it is an anxiety from our point of view, that we say, "My God, what happens if the guarantee doesn't function?" But you must also consider the thing from the Russian point of view. In order to make this attack, it is not enough for the Russians to doubt that the guarantee will function -- they must feel pretty certain that it will not function; otherwise it is suicide. The whole history of the Russian regime in all its phases - under Stalin and under the present lot - is against this kind of gamble.

We all talk very easily and airily about guarantees being shreds of paper and the Russians never keeping to any agreement. In the general form, that is not true. Wherever the Russians have moved in militarily they have broken every agreement about what should happen to that country. But they haven't as a rule moved into countries militarily in breach of a guarantee -- that's something quite different. Russian aggression has taken place regularly and exclusively in areas which were not guaranteed. (Someone from audience says: "Where there was no more danger of intervention..."). Lowenthal continues: "Where there was absolutely no danger of retaliation. The one case where they exposed themselves to retaliation was in Korea where they had practically a guarantee that there would be none, by Mr. Acheson's statement. I do not see the Russians as such gamblers and I do not see them suddenly having such tremendous internal difficulties that they are driven to become such gamblers. If there is a guarantee backed by local troops and by the presence of Americans on this side, and I would go even farther than that and say even if Americans disappeared from the continent, even if there were only two American parachute divisions in Britain, that should be enough to give the Russians pause. I do not believe that if the Russians ever accept a withdrawal with such guarantees that they will take the gamble of coming back.

Point two: I do not think there is such a thing as a Khrushchev plan. There was a Khrushchev interview on the American radio where, incidentally, he did not insist that the Americans should disappear from Europe, but he mentioned a number of countries and he did not mention Britain, which is a very odd thing to which he ought to be kept. But at any rate, this was not an official diplomatic document -- there is no Russian official diplomatic document proposing disengagement. That, in my opinion, is no accident. Khrushchev threw this out as a propaganda hint to expose the weakness of our political position. He was not prepared to commit himself to it -- the Soviet government is not prepared to commit itself to it -- and for the very good reason that they know that if we really put this forward, it would not be to their advantage.

I think that is the explanation why the Russians have fallen completely silent on the subject since the serious discussion on disengagement has started in the West. But, does that mean that because it's to



their disadvantage, particularly from an ideological point of view, they will never do it because of pressure? Now that is the second difference I really had to point out. Ideology is a very serious factor, because it is bound up with the justification for the regime in Russia itself, and of course, it's part of that ideology that they are the wave of the future, that history marches with them. Well, after all, there have been defeats for Communism. There have been setbacks. And it is part of the doctrine that sometimes such setbacks happen. After all, the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 was liquidated. It is, of course, not a thing which they accept lightly -- and it is a thing which they will make the utmost effort to avoid -- there is no question. I do not think that we can conclude from that, as a matter of dogma, that the Soviet party regime will never withdraw from any country where it has established its own regime so long as it exists at home. That, I think, would really be a doctrine of despair and I think an unjustified doctrine of despair.

Now that brings me to the question of how strong are the forces of disintegration in Soviet society and is there nothing we can do about it? I think there are contradictions -- we have often talked about them and I think they will still go on and think they are not stagnant. But I do not accept that they will lead to an automatic disintegration of this regime independent of what we do. On the contrary, I believe that our policy, apart from everything else, is a factor which may make the the disintegration of the Soviet regime more or less likely. Of course, it can't be decisive by itself, but it can contribute in one direction or another. By not raising these questions, which were just as ready to be raised then as they are now -- by not raising these questions in the months following Stalin's death, in the time of the Beria approaches to Mr. Churchill, at the time when Mr. Churchill proposed the summit meetings, and a so-called European Locarno, which is the same thing as disengagement under another name, by not raising these questions, then, we helped to consolidate the post-Stalin regime in its first critical period. By not raising these same problems in November 1956 at the time of the Polish and Hungarian events, we helped to consolidate the post-Stalin regime in its second critical period. If, on the other hand, we do raise these problems, we do raise an acute contradiction -- one of the most fundamental contradictions in the Soviet regime. Because we offer them a deal which would at the very least not diminish their security as a state against the atomic armament of the Germans and would reduce their economic burden, but which would be indeed extremely awkward from the point of view of party ideology. That seems to me just the kind of contribution which we ought to make to the Soviet contradictions.

Mr. Hudson

Well, I think that was a very formidable piece of argument and I feel shaken by it, but I still feel that what we may call the backward movement for the West which is involved in disengagement would be more relaxing than it would be for the Soviet Union. It's been, after all, extremely difficult to get NATO established, to get the concurrence of wills, the cooperation of governments, and the organization of forces to the point which it has reached. The totalitarian state has a very much stronger position for continuity of policy in a period when there's nothing extremely critical going on. I think part of the trouble with the West at the moment is that nothing very critical has been happening lately and there is in the background, of course, the fear of nuclear war, the feeling that this frightful threat is hanging over all humanity. But there hasn't been recently the kind of crisis which brings nations to-

gether in the coalition and keeps them cooperating.

Although theoretically the West would keep a collective organization for enforcing these guarantees -- for acting if there were any violation of them -- I don't quite see the maintenance of the same degree of resolution and cooperation that has built up NATO. In fact, it is fundamentally about this guarantee that I am most skeptical.

Mr. Lowenthal said that although the operation of the guarantees wouldn't be certain, on the other hand, the Russians -- or Khrushchev or whoever it is -- couldn't be certain they could not operate so that the uncertainty would act both ways. Well, all I can say now is that I think there is a tendency with dictators to gamble -- it was rather peculiarly lacking in Stalin I would say because with all his ruthlessness and cruelty, he was extremely cautious when it came to encounters with comparable forces. But Khrushchev at any rate strikes some people who have met him as being a person of rather a different temperament. And I think to create a kind of uncertainty of that sort on the assumption that the people you're dealing with are going to be very prudent and careful is not really a part of wisdom.

I still think that the most important element in guarantees or in treaties of alliance is this automatic nature of a commitment which is a great asset we have at present. And that anything which takes that away in an age, in which the responsibility of actually committing a country to war is so frightful, is a very dangerous one. Because guarantees do exist on paper and the question is what will happen in the moment, if the moment comes, when that guarantee has to be implemented. And there's not only the prophetic question as to what will happen, but also what people -- everyone concerned -- thinks is going to happen. And for that reason, I myself wouldn't consider that the system of guarantees as contemplated, even if there were American units still left on this side of the Atlantic, would have the same force as the present military organization of NATO with units which would be involved in any Soviet military move that might be made in Europe.