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Foreign Policy and the New Administration

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FOREIGN POLICY AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

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The responsibility for the conduct of our relations with other nations rests only with the Administration in power. The President assumes this responsibility when he takes office on January 20th. But foreign policy does not come to an end with one Administration and begin anew with the next. The slate is not wiped clean every four years. There is a continuity of the problems which confront the nation from abroad and a continuity of the responses of our government to these problems from one Administration to another.

This is not to say that a particular Administration will not stamp the course of foreign policy with the brand of its own ideas. The process, however, is a slow one. It is slow partly because the problems which we face abroad are not of our exclusive creation and, hence, are not amenable to our exclusive remedies. And, partly, it is slow because the impact of the ideas of a new Administration must permeate a large and complex bureaucracy within our own government before they make themselves felt in action on the problems to which they are directed.

We can grasp the significance of this continuity in foreign policy by reference to recent events in Cuba and in Laos. In the one instance, President Kennedy had urged an Alliance for Progress of all the American Republics. Within this concept, he presented a broad and cohesive outline for a cooperative advance in the relations of the nations of the Western Hemisphere. The presentation was well-received by other Republics of the Americas. New vistas of common benefit were opened by it.

Nevertheless, within ninety days of the President's taking office we were not yet at the beginning of this peaceful advance but rather face-to-face with a military crisis in Cuba brought about by the launching of an invasion of anti-Castro forces. Instead of being in a position to move forward on a new constructive approach to all of Latin America, the Administration was compelled to direct its attention to a critical juncture in our relations with one nation of the region.

This juncture was reached during this Administration. But the roads leading to it began many months ago. The juncture represented the culmination of an accumulation of hostility on the part of Cuba to this nation and an accumulation of our responses to that hostility.

On the other side of the globe, in Laos, something similar has transpired. In fact, this situation had already reached the point of crisis even before the new Administration took office. It had reached

this stage because in preceding years a peaceful land, once remote from the rest of the world, had been turned into a bone of contention in the larger clash of ideologies and power elsewhere in the world. As a result the people of Laos who until recent years had scarcely ever heard a shot fired in anger found themselves the focal point of steadily converging military forces from outside. Military clashes in Laos which produced the immediate crisis involved but a handful of men. But these clashes opened fissures with large implications for world peace.

The direct involvement of the Soviet Union in Laos as a supplier of military aid to Laotian factions was one factor in producing the crisis and a factor of comparatively recent vintage. But it was preceded by the involvement of the Chinese-supported North Vietnamese government for a long time in a similar role. The sum total of this outside communist-involvement in the local Laotian situation and its progressive enlargement is not measurable. But our own progressive involvement will give us some insight into the process by which the Laotians were plucked from the obscurity of remote Southeast Asia and steadily moved into a focus of world-wide significance.

When I first visited Laos in 1953, there were only 2 American junior officials in the entire country. There was no aid program to speak of, and, may I add, no Laotian army to speak of, to aid. But

seven years later, by the time the Laotian crisis broke in full force in the very last days of the Eisenhower Administration, there were in Laos hundreds of U.S. officials of several agencies and departments. We had expended hundreds of millions of dollars on aid, largely for military purposes. We had financed the training of thousands of Laotian soldiers. And, finally, our own naval and other forces had converged in the general vicinity of Laos because of the steady advance of communist-oriented Laotians in the country. This vast commitment of our resources, not unlike that of the Communists, had little to do with either the needs or realities of the situation in Laos. It had much to do with winning hollow propaganda victories in the cold war.

To this situation, too, President Kennedy brought new ideas. In specifics he worked with the United Kingdom and India in an effort to bring about a cease-fire and the neutralization of Laos. In other words, he sought to take Laos out of the cold war. Left to their own devices, the Laotian people would ask for nothing more. From the point of view of the great powers this solution would mark a significant step towards a more rational world situation, one which anyone of them could take in the interests of peace with little, if any, sacrifice of significant national interests.

The initial Soviet reaction to this proposal seemed favorable enough. Nevertheless, in the working out of the details through the existing channels of diplomacy, weeks of delay have ensued.

All the while, professions of the desire for peace in Laos have continued and all the while, the fighting has continued in that country. All the while, the jockeying for some assumed advantage has gone on by much the same responses with which this situation has been dealt for years.

The crises in Laos and Cuba reveal vividly the continuity of both the problems and responses in foreign policy and the difficulties of altering either overnight. Without wishing to downgrade the seriousness of either situation, I must emphasize, however, that they are but a fractional part of a larger picture. Behind Cuba stands the vast panorama of continuing difficulties and a continuing inadequacy of response to them with respect to all of Latin America. Yet this far more significant picture can be overlooked in a fixation on the sensational developments within the troubled island just ninety miles off our shores. We have managed to live with a militantly hostile Cuba for two years. I do not believe we could live very well for two days with a militantly hostile Latin America.

Yet, what has happened in Cuba under Castro can occur in other Latin American countries. The seed of Castroism is compounded of ruthless totalitarian technique plus messianic indigenous leadership,

plus support from outside this Hemisphere. It is doubtful that this seed can grow except in the soil of social and economic discontent. Unfortunately such soil covers much of Latin America, from the Caribbean shores down the great spine of the Andes.

It is at least conceivable that this Hemisphere can be insulated from a flow/without of material support to totalitarian forces within but the task would be immensely difficult and costly and of only limited efficacy. It is not conceivable, however, that in this day and age of instant and easy communications, this Hemisphere can be isolated from the transference of totalitarian techniques from elsewhere. Nor can the appearance of messianic indigenous leadership in Latin American countries be forestalled because what is indigenous to Latin America is by definition beyond the control of this nation.

If it is to our interests--and it is--to prevent the spread of a divisive and hostile totalitarianism throughout the Hemisphere, there is one point at which a check may be feasible. That point is where a cooperative effort with others renders the soil of the Americas infertile to the seed of totalitarianism before it takes root. And in substance, that is the idea which the President expressed in such comprehensive form a few weeks ago in his speech on an Alliance for Progress in the Western Hemisphere. It is one thing to advance this idea. It is another to bring it to fruition--to promote that economic and social progress which alone promises the removal of the acids of mass discontent from the soil of this Hemisphere.

There was much to do with respect to social and economic conditions in Latin America before this Administration took office. After the recent developments in Cuba there is still much to do. Time was short when this Administration took over. Now it may be even shorter.

If the situation in Latin America is to be altered so that it will no longer provide an incubus for totalitarianism then a great effort must be made along the lines of the alliance for progress proposal which the President has advanced and that effort must begin to take concrete form in the very near future. The effort, moreover, must be a cooperative one because the stake of Latin Americans is far greater and more direct than our own and, in great part, the situation is amenable to change only as Latin Americans are willing to change it. But if they are willing to do what must be done for freedom and progress within their own countries, then the stake of this nation in the future of this Hemisphere is such that we must be prepared to join with them in the effort. I know that the President is so prepared. Are the rest of us also prepared? If we, no less than the Latin Americans, are willing to face the dimensions of the difficulties and act in concert on them, then the President's ideas of an Alliance for Progress can be and will be interpreted into effective action.

Not unlike Cuba, the crisis in Laos is but the visible tip of a vast iceberg involving the mainland of Western Asia. It is not only in Laos that the conditions of peace do not yet exist. We may see them, there, now in striking form. But if we look beneath the tip, we will see that the difficulties which confront us, particularly, fork out from Laos into Thailand and even more so into Viet Nam. Nor do they end at the sea off Southeast Asia. The conditions of peace in any reliable sense do not exist at Formosa or in Korea any more than in Viet Nam or Laos. In all of these situations, the new Administration begins with what may best be described as the response of the holding action. Such stability as exists in them, in part, is knitted together with huge aid-programs of one kind or another, backed with a heavy deployment of our own military forces in the general area.

At best, these situations will remain uncertain for some time to come. At best, the response which we have heretofore given to them will have to be continued for some time to come. It is not yet clear to what extent these situations can be altered in the direction of a more durable and less costly peace by more effective diplomacy but I am confident that the President will not hesitate to bring to bear new ideas to that end. We shall not know the possibilities until ideas have been tested and, I may add, that this testing has already begun in Laos.

It will be a cautious process--this testing--because the President is a prudent man who has uppermost in mind the security of this nation. It will be a slow process for reasons which I have already set forth. But if it is possible to achieve a more stable and less costly peace in the Far East, I know that the President will leave no stone unturned in his efforts to achieve it.

What applies to Latin America and to the Southeast Asia and the Far East, applies also to Europe and to Africa. We have been involved deeply in the problems of the former for a long time. In the last year or two we have become involved significantly in the problems of the latter. I shall not, today, go into the details of the situation which confronts us on these continents. Nevertheless, I would point out by way of example that the division of Berlin and Germany has not disappeared with the advent of a new Administration. Nor have the weaknesses in NATO dissolved merely because we have installed a new President. Nor have the Eastern European nations yet obtained that degree of national freedom of action which permits a full measure of contact with Western Europe, a condition which must prevail if there is to be a sound peace on that continent.

I shall not go into detail, either, on the vastly complicated problems of trying to bring control over the weapons of mass destruction and a measure of reduction in the great burden of taxation on our people

and all peoples which is entailed in billions upon billions of armaments expenditures. These problems were complex on the day this Administration took office. They grow more complex as each day passes without the beginnings of a solution.

As with Latin America and Southeast Asia, the President may be expected to bring to bear new ideas on all of these problems of foreign policy which he inherits. Indeed, some ideas already have been initiated. The process of making these ideas effective, however, is, as I have already noted, at best a slow one. After years of close observation, moreover, I am personally persuaded that the machinery of this process within the Executive Branch of this government has grown so cumbersome and ineffective that there is grave danger to the principle of responsible leadership by the President. I would hope, therefore, that this Administration would proceed promptly to a thorough overhaul of the machinery of intelligence which functions in many Departments and Agencies in a fashion which deeply influences foreign policy and its conduct.

I would hope, further, that the machinery for the countless secondary decisions of policy through which the President's ideas and primary decisions would be thoroughly overhauled and streamlined and that the preponderant responsibility in these matters would be lodged where it has not been for many years--in the office of the Secretary of State.

The difficulties which we face in the world are immense. The responsibility of the President in connection with them are enormous. He carries the ultimate burden for all of us-Democrats and Republicans alike. He has a right to expect general support in these matters, a support which must include, may I say, constructive criticism in matters of foreign policy.

I want to say that he has had that kind of support in Congress for the first three months that he has been in office. He has had it from Democrats and Republicans alike. I am confident that he has it and will continue to have it from the people of the United States.