

and France, and later, a resurgent Germany, dominated international diplomacy. Japan was the only non-European state that could boast of Great Power status.

The aftermath of World War II was far different. With their economies ruined and their people exhausted, European states lost their dominance of world affairs to the United States and the Soviet Union, the two states whose size, industrial might, and military strength had been largely responsible for the defeat of the Axis powers. The unlikely alliance between the democratic, capitalist United States and the totalitarian, communist Soviet Union began to break down, however, in the closing months of World War II and disintegrated completely after hostilities ended. The establishment of pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union's annexation of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and parts of Poland confirmed the West's old fears about communist designs for world domination. At the same time, staunch Western opposition to Soviet expansion reinforced the Soviet leaders' convictions that capitalist nations were determined to destroy communism. Out of these mutual fears began the Cold War, the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States that dominated world diplomacy until the late 1980s.

Another symptom of Europe's diminished international role after World War II was the disintegration of the European colonial empires. This dramatic political change had many causes, including the military and financial exhaustion of post-war Great Britain and France, the expansion and subsequent collapse of Japan's Asian empire, Soviet and U.S. opposition to colonialism, the upsurge of nationalism in the colonies, and the leadership of such men as Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi in India, Achmed Sukarno in Indonesia, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, and others. By the mid 1960s just short of ninety former European colonies, most of them in Africa and Asia, had become independent.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Europeans, especially Western Europeans, enjoyed high incomes, excellent health care, and exceptional educational opportunities. European states continued to play an important role in world affairs. But the age of European world dominance had ended.

## Cold War Origins: A U.S. Perspective



### 108 ▼ George Kennan, *THE LONG TELEGRAM*

Historians have minutely examined the events and issues that led to the Cold War, and much has been written about which side, the Soviet Union or the United States, was more to blame for causing it. One thing is certain, however: 1946 was a pivotal year in Soviet-U.S. relations. Until then, despite wartime disagreements over military strategy and emerging differences about the postwar settlement in Europe, many statesmen and diplomats sought cooperation, not confrontation, between the two emerging superpowers. During 1946, however, attitudes hardened. Negotiations over nuclear arms control failed in June, and the Paris foreign ministers' conference over Eastern Europe ended in acrimony in August. By the end of

the year moderates such as U.S. Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace and the Soviet career diplomat Maksim Litvinov had both been removed from office. Leaders on both sides now saw little chance that further Soviet-U.S. conflict could be avoided.

Within the U.S. administration one document in particular articulated this bleak assessment of Soviet-U.S. relations in 1946. Written in February by the Moscow-based career diplomat George Kennan, what came to be known as the Long Telegram profoundly influenced U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union in the immediate postwar era and throughout the Cold War. Its author, born into a strict Protestant household in Milwaukee in 1904, entered the U.S. Foreign Service directly after graduating from Princeton in 1925. Having mastered Russian through studies at the University of Berlin, he served in Moscow, Berlin, and Prague before returning to Moscow in 1944 as a special advisor to the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman. In early February 1946 he received a directive from the State Department to analyze a recent speech by Joseph Stalin that Washington considered confrontational and hostile. Kennan, an advocate of a hard line against the Soviet Union, used the opportunity to compose what is arguably the best-known such dispatch in the history of the U.S. Foreign Service. The Long Telegram was read by State Department officials, cabled to U.S. embassies around the world, and made required reading for hundreds of military officers. In 1947 an edited version of the telegram was published as an article by "X" in the journal *Foreign Affairs*.

In 1947 Kennan was appointed head of the State Department's newly created policy planning staff with responsibility for long-range foreign policy planning. His opposition to the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to increased military spending, and to U.S. involvement in the Korean War led to his resignation in 1951. Since then with the exception of brief ambassadorships to the Soviet Union in 1952 and to Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1963, he has devoted himself to research, writing, and university teaching on foreign policy and Soviet affairs.

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### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What views of capitalism and socialism are articulated, according to Kennan, in official Soviet propaganda?
2. What does Kennan consider the most notable characteristics of the Russian past?
3. How, according to Kennan, has this past shaped the policies and views of the Soviet government since 1917?
4. In Kennan's view what role does communist ideology play in shaping the Soviet government's policies?
5. According to Kennan, what strengths and weaknesses does the Soviet Union bring to the anticipated conflict with the United States?
6. What, according to Kennan, are the implications of his analysis for U.S. foreign and domestic policies? What must be done to counter the Soviet threat?

**PART 1: BASIC FEATURES OF  
POSTWAR SOVIET OUTLOOK,  
AS PUT FORWARD BY OFFICIAL  
PROPAGANDA MACHINE,  
ARE AS FOLLOWS**

(a) USSR still lives in antagonistic "capitalist encirclement" with which in the long run there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence. . . .

(b) Capitalist world is beset with internal conflicts, inherent in nature of capitalist society. . . . Greatest of them is that between England and US.

(c) Internal conflicts of capitalism inevitably generate wars. Wars thus generated may be of two kinds: intra-capitalist wars between two capitalist states and wars of intervention against socialist world. Smart capitalists, vainly seeking escape from inner conflicts of capitalism, incline toward the latter.

(d) Intervention against USSR, while it would be disastrous to those who understood it, would cause renewed delay in progress of Soviet socialism and must therefore be forestalled at all costs.

(e) Conflicts between capitalist states, though likewise fraught with danger for USSR, nevertheless hold out great possibilities for advancement of socialist cause, particularly if USSR remains militarily powerful, ideologically monolithic and faithful to its present brilliant leadership. . . .

**PART 2: BACKGROUND  
OF OUTLOOK**

At bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity. Originally, this was insecurity of a peaceful agricultural people trying to live on vast exposed plain in neighborhood of fierce nomadic peoples. To this was added, as Russia came into contact with economically advanced West, fear of more competent, more powerful, more highly organized societies in that area. But this latter type of insecurity was one which afflicted Russian

rulers rather than Russian people; for Russian rulers have invariably sensed that their rule was relatively archaic in form, fragile and artificial in its psychological foundations, unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of Western countries. For this reason they have always feared foreign penetration, feared direct contact between Western world and their own, feared what would happen if Russians learned truth about world without or if foreigners learned truth about world within. And they have learned to seek security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts and compromises with it.

It was no coincidence that Marxism, which had smouldered ineffectively for half a century in Western Europe, caught hold and blazed for the first time in Russia. Only in this land which had never known a friendly neighbor or indeed any tolerant equilibrium of separate powers, either internal or international, could a doctrine thrive which viewed economic conflicts of society as insoluble by peaceful means. After establishment of Bolshevik regime, Marxist dogma, rendered even more truculent and intolerant by Lenin's interpretation, became a perfect vehicle for sense of insecurity with which Bolsheviks, even more than previous Russian rulers, were afflicted. In this dogma, with its basic altruism of purpose, they found justification for their instinctive fear of outside world, for the dictatorship without which they did not know how to rule, for cruelties they did not dare not to inflict, for sacrifices they felt bound to demand. In the name of Marxism they sacrificed every single ethical value in their methods and tactics. Today they cannot dispense with it. It is fig leaf of their moral and intellectual respectability. Without it they would stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regimes. . . . Thus Soviet leaders are driven [by] necessities of their own past and present position to put forward a dogma which [apparent

omission] outside world as evil, hostile and menacing, but as bearing within itself germs of creeping disease and destined to be wracked with growing internal convulsions until it is given final coup de grace by rising power of socialism and yields to new and better world. . . .

### PART 3: PROJECTION OF SOVIET OUTLOOK IN PRACTICAL POLICY ON OFFICIAL LEVEL

We have now seen nature and background of Soviet program. What may we expect by way of its practical implementation? . . .

On official plane we must look for following:

(a) Internal policy devoted to increasing in every way strength and prestige of Soviet state: intensive military-industrialization; maximum development of armed forces; great displays to impress outsiders; continued secretiveness about internal matters, designed to conceal weaknesses and to keep opponents in the dark.

(b) Wherever it is considered timely and promising, efforts will be made to advance official limits of Soviet power. . . .

(c) Russians will participate officially in international organizations where they see opportunity of extending Soviet power or of inhibiting or diluting power of others. . . .

(d) Toward colonial areas and backward or dependent peoples, Soviet policy . . . will be directed toward weakening of power and influence and contacts of advanced Western nations, on theory that insofar as this policy is successful, there will be created a vacuum which will favor Communist-Soviet penetration. . . .

(e) Russians will strive energetically to develop Soviet representation in, and official ties with, countries in which they sense strong possibilities of opposition to Western centers of power. This applies to such widely separated points as Germany, Argentina, Middle Eastern countries, etc.

(f) In international economic matters, Soviet policy will really be dominated by pursuit of autarchy<sup>1</sup> for Soviet Union and Soviet-dominated adjacent areas taken together. . . .

### PART 4: FOLLOWING MAY BE SAID AS TO WHAT WE MAY EXPECT BY WAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF BASIC SOVIET POLICIES ON UNOFFICIAL, OR SUBTERRANEAN PLANE. . . .

(a) To undermine general political and strategic potential of major Western Powers. Efforts will be made in such countries to disrupt national self-confidence, to hamstring measures of national defense, to increase social and industrial unrest, to stimulate all forms of disunity. All persons with grievances, whether economic or racial, will be urged to seek redress not in mediation and compromise, but in defiant, violent struggle for destruction of other elements of society. Here poor will be set against rich, black against white, young against old, newcomers against established residents, etc. . . .

(c) Where individual governments stand in path of Soviet purposes pressure will be brought for their removal from office. . . .

(d) In foreign countries Communists will, as a rule, work toward destruction of all forms of personal independence — economic, political or moral. Their system can handle only individuals who have been brought into complete dependence on higher power. Thus, persons who are financially independent — such as individual businessmen, estate owners, successful farmers, artisans — and all those who exercise local leadership or have local prestige — such as popular local clergymen or political figures — are anathema.

(e) Everything possible will be done to set major Western Powers against each other. Anti-British talk will be plugged among Americans,

<sup>1</sup>Economic self-sufficiency as a national policy; getting along without goods from other countries.

anti-American talk among British. Continentals, including Germans, will be taught to abhor both Anglo-Saxon powers.<sup>2</sup> . . .

#### PART 5: [PRACTICAL DEDUCTIONS FROM STANDPOINT OF US POLICY]

In summary, we have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with US there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*,<sup>3</sup> that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure. . . . In addition, it has an elaborate and far-flung apparatus for exertion of its influence in other countries, an apparatus of amazing flexibility and versatility, managed by people whose experience and skill in underground methods are presumably without parallel in history. Finally, it is seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions. . . . This is admittedly not a pleasant picture. Problem of how to cope with this force [is] undoubtedly greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably greatest it will ever have to face. . . . But I would like to record my conviction that problem is within our power to solve — and that without recourse to any general military conflict. And in support of this conviction there are certain observations of a more encouraging nature I should like to make:

(1) Soviet power, unlike that of Hitlerite Germany, is neither schematic<sup>4</sup> nor adventuristic. It does not work by fixed plans. It does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw — and usually does — when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely

has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige-engaging showdowns.

(2) Gauged against Western world as a whole, Soviets are still by far the weaker force. Thus, their success will really depend on degree of cohesion, firmness and vigor which Western world can muster. . . .

(3) Success of Soviet system, as form of internal power, is not yet finally proven. . . .

(4) All Soviet propaganda beyond Soviet security sphere is basically negative and destructive. It should therefore be relatively easy to combat it by any intelligent and really constructive program.

For these reasons I think we may approach calmly and with good heart problem of how to deal with Russia. As to how this approach should be made, I only wish to advance, by way of conclusion, following comments:

(1) Our first step must be to apprehend, and recognize for what it is, the nature of the movement with which we are dealing. We must study it with same courage, detachment, objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which doctor studies unruly and unreasonable individual.

(2) We must see that our public is educated to realities of Russian situation. . . .

(3) Much depends on health and vigor of our own society. World communism is like malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is point at which domestic and foreign policies meet. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqués. . . .

(4) We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and construc-

<sup>2</sup>England and the United States.

<sup>3</sup>Latin for "manner of living"; hence, a temporary agreement in a dispute pending final settlement.

<sup>4</sup>In this context, having a definite outline or plan to follow.

tive picture of sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. . . .

(5) Finally we must have courage and self-confidence to cling to our own methods and conceptions of human society. After all, the greatest

danger that can befall us in coping with this problem of Soviet communism is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping.

## Cold War Origins: A Soviet Perspective



109 ▼ *Nikolai Novikov,*  
*TELEGRAM, SEPTEMBER 27, 1946*

According to some scholars there is a Soviet version of the Long Telegram: a cable sent to Moscow from Washington in September 1946 by the recently appointed Soviet ambassador to the United States, Nikolai Novikov. Trained in the early 1930s at Leningrad State University in Middle Eastern economics and languages, Novikov abandoned plans for an academic career when he was drafted into the foreign service because of his knowledge of the Middle East. In 1941 he was named ambassador to Egypt, where he also served as liaison to the Yugoslav and Greek governments in exile, both of which were located in Cairo. Early in 1945 he was named deputy chief of the Soviet mission in Washington, D.C.; in April he became Soviet ambassador to the United States. He resigned from the foreign service in 1947 and returned to the Soviet Union, where he lived in obscurity. He published a memoir of his foreign service career in 1989.

We have little information about the background of Novikov's telegram, which was unknown to scholars until a Soviet official revealed it to a group of Soviet and U.S. historians attending a meeting on the origins of the Cold War in Washington in 1990. According to Novikov's memoir, while he and the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov (1890–1986) were attending the Paris foreign ministers' conference in August 1946, Molotov requested that he write an analysis of U.S. foreign policy goals. Also according to Novikov, Molotov examined an early outline of the document in Paris and made several suggestions about improvements. This information lends credence to the theory that Molotov, who favored a hard line against the West, wanted Novikov's report to present a dark and perhaps exaggerated picture of U.S. foreign policy goals to strengthen his hand against rivals who favored caution and compromise.

We know that Molotov read Novikov's completed cable. The passages underlined in the following excerpt were passages that Molotov himself underlined on the original document. What happened next is unclear. Did Molotov show the telegram to Stalin and other high-ranking officials? Did Novikov's telegram contribute to the atmosphere of confrontation building in 1946? The answer to both questions is probably yes, but until historians gain access to Soviet archives, no one will know exactly how important Novikov's telegram was in the Cold War's murky beginnings.