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Changes on the international scene, 1955.

CHANGES ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

February 20, 1955

Sharp changes, my dear friends, have in recent weeks taken place on the international scene, but the significance of them is not quite clear. Pierre Mendes-France was forced to resign as Premier of France, and Georgi Malenkov was forced to resign as Premier of the Soviet Union.

The successor of Mendes-France, who was head of the twentieth cabinet since the World War, has not yet been chosen. Three attempts by as many French political leaders to form a cabinet have so far failed. France is at the moment still without a government.

The successor of Malenkov was announced the same day as his resignation - Nikolai Bulganin. And the day following, Marshal Georgi Zhukov was chosen for the important post of Minister of Defense.

by these sharp and unexpected changes the world has been left bewildered and speculating. Mendes-France was a very popular, successful premier. He had liquidated, you may recall, the very unpopular Indo-China War, which for seven years had drained the resources and the manpower of France. He had brought about some very important reforms in domestic economy; he had launched important efforts to raise the standard of living of the people of France. There have been very considerable Nationalist movements and uprisings in North Africa, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mendes-France projected certain basic reforms and certain political concessions and measures of self-government which had within them the potentialities of pacifying these countries. He had also maneuvered through, you may recall, through the Assembly the pact for the rearmament of Western Germany and had obtained for France some important concessions in the Saar. On his recent visit to our country, Mendes-France received a triumphal reception. Nevertheless, a few weeks ago, amidst great turbulence and violent acrimony, he was forced out of the position by a decisive vote of the French Assembly.

Malenkov had been in office as premier of the Soviet for nearly 23 months, practically ever since the death of Stalin. He had been advertised as a strong man. From all reports, he was popular among the masses in Russia. He had successfully brought about the liquidation of Lavrenti Beria, who was his possible rival. Nevertheless, at a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Union of Sovet Republics in the Kremlin, the chairman of the Council read a communication from Malenkov, in the presence of Malenkov, in which the latter requested to be relieved of his post, and he gave as his reason his inexperience in state work, although for nearly a quarter of a century he was one of the right-hand men of Stalin, and he also gave as his reason his guilt and responsibility for the unsatisfactory state of affairs which had arisen in agriculture, although the major responsibility for it really rests with the man who brought about Malenkov's downfall - Nikita Khrushchev.

There have been many explanations given for these startling events, and much speculation about the future. It is very difficult for an outsider to follow the intricacies of party politics in another country or the devious maneuvers of strong personalities in the game of party domination, personal prestige, and power politics. Anyone who claims to be an expert on Russian affairs has delusions of clairvoyance. Churchill said recently, upon the anniouncement of these events, that "the future is veiled in obscurity," and that is an English understatement.

We can but guess what is going on behind the Iron Curtain and in the inner circles of the people in control of Russia and who rule Russia with an iron hand. We can only guess.

With the death of Stalin, the hard task-master of Russia under whom the life of the people had been rugged indeed and austere, it was hoped by many in Russia that a new era would be ushered in, that the people would be allowed to breathe a little more freely, that more attention would now be given to their personal needs, and their hopes for a better and easier life - better homes to live in, better food,

better clothing - some of the things which they knew that many people in the so-called capitalist countries were enjoying; the lessening of taxes, perhaps, intended to enlarge the State war machine. In placeof the ever-mounting demands of heavy industry which is largely directed towards armament and the requirements of war, they hoped that more of the national income would now be devoted to consumers' goods, to the things that would make the life of the average Russian a little easier, a little more comfortable. After all, they had been living under this regime of proletarian didatorship for nearly 35 years, more than a generation. Revolutionary emergencies - some of them, at least - should by now be over. The sacrifices which were demanded of them in terms of severe austerities in the early days of the Revolution ought now to be relaxed. People ought to begin to have an opportunity to live.

Of course such a condition could only come about with the lessening of the tension with the western world, with less talk of war, of the Communist conquest of the world, less talk of the need for increased preparations for war with the western world. In other words, these things could only come about with a policy of conciliation and co-existence with the western world.

Now Malenkov seems to have been the spokesman and the advocate of these new desires or wishes or trends among the Russian people. He tried to put both of these ideas into practice - more consumer goods for the people and a more conciliatory foreign policy. You may recall time and again there emanated from Moscow and from the circles of important Communist leaders since Malenkov came into power expressions of good will towards the West, cooperation, suggestions that the Stalin era was over, that a new era had dawned. But unfortunately, Malenkov failed in both his objectives. The Russian economy, as you know, is based largely on agriculture, and agriculture last year suffered disastrously from drought in Russia and the harvests, to a large extent, were ruined. There followed a nation-wide food shortage. Other consumer goods and housing did not materialize in sufficient size to be impressive.

So there was failure on that score.

And there was failure on the other score of conciliation. You may recall that the first sign of relaxed Russian control as expressed in East Germany resulted in extensive riots which hurt the prestige of Malenkov a great deal. That is the unfortunate part about dictatorship. Totalitarianism can never, by gradual stages, relax and pass over into democracy. There is no such technique of a slow and peaceful transformation of dictatorship to freedom. When you give a people X freedom, which they did not have before, they proceed to demand X and Y and Z.

But especially was Malenkov's failure pronounced in his effort to stop the movement for the rearmament of Western Germany. That, in the main, I believe was responsible for his downfall. The hope was evidently entertained by him, by his associates, that Russia's new policy of friendly co-existence would persuade the Western powers to abandon the scheme of rearming western Germany and include it in their military alliance. This is what the Russians feared most. Russia has always feared an armed Germany.

But far from meeting Malenkov half way, the West, under our leadership, pressed even harder for the rearmament of Western Germany. His conciliatory policy was not matched. In fact, his conciliatory policy became suspect; we were warned against it. In Korea and in Indo-China Malenkov had agreed to a settlement between the opposing forces in which our country was either directly or indirectly involved. But allies still pressed for a European military alliance, which would include a rearmed Germany which all Russians interpret as a military alliance against them.

Having failed, therefore, in both instances - domestically and internationally - Malenkov's replacement became inevitable, just as a return to former Stalinish policies became clearly indicated to the Russian leaders. This seems to have taken place in Moscow, although again, I want to express my reservation that one cannot at all be certain.

It is thought in some circles that the appointment of Zhukov, the war hero of Russia, to the important post of Minister of Defense means the rise of the army a in Russia to power, and that accordingly from here on, more nationalistic, in contrast to a world Communistic line, might be expected. I question it. The Communist Part y is still the supreme power in the Soviet Union. Zhukov is a Party man who will take orders from the Party. The Party in the Soviet Union so interpenetrates the Army, as it does every other department of national life, that any independent action on the part of Army leaders seems to be unlikely. In 1930, you will recall, the Party under Stalin liquidated practically all the top army leaders of Russia because the Party could not trust them.

I believe, therefore, that we shall see from now on a continuing of the old Stalinist line, as if the Malenkov era did not intervene between his death and the present moment. Of course the basic issue in Russian life remains unsolved. The basic problem remains unrelieved. The struggle over economic policies - food versus guns; butter versus bullets; this will continue, and may, after a time, bring about a new unsettlement in Party leadership, for hunger has a way of its own - topple governments and destroy leaders.

Conditions in Russia being what they are, I believe that the likelihood of war involving Russia has been considerably lessened. I personally draw a lesson from what has happened in the Kremlin, or rather what has happened in the Kremlin has reinforced a position which I have held for quite a number of years - sort of a voice crying in the wilderness. If we really wish to see a more nationalist line develop in Russia - and Secretary Dulles the other day pleaded for that very thing - that is, a program of national welfare incontrast to the ambitions of international Communism - if we want the Russian people and the Russian government to devote itself to its own internal problem of improving the life of its own people and raising its standard of living instead of concerning themselves with international Communist

revolution - in other words, if we really wish to further what may be called the Malenkov line in the future - the line of conciliation and co - existence, then we shall have radically to modify or totally to abandon our policy with reference to the rearmament of Western Germany.

And it is this, our policy of rearming Western Germany, which I believe - and I may be among the very few who believe that - which was responsible for the fall of Mendes-France. Mendes-France commanded substantial majorities in Parliament when he worked for peace or internal reforms, peace in Asia. He had the backing of the large radical and Communist bloc in the French Barliament, but when he began to press for the rearmament of Western Germany under our prodding; he lost that bloc as wellaas other smaller elements in the French Assembly which are dead set against the rearmament of Western Germany, not because of any Communistic leanings, because many of them belong to the rightests, but out of fear of a rearmed Germany, out of the experience of the French people twice within a generation with a rearmed Cermany.

Mendes-France managed to get a very small majority for the approval of the pact to rearm Germany (I believe it was some 30 votes), and this pact, by the way, has not yet been approved by the Upper House in France, but his former backers, and now his enemies, have been waiting for the opportunity when additional numbers in opposition Mendes-France on some other issue would be added to their numbers and overthow him, and the issue appeared in the matter of some reform in Tunisia, and Mendes-France was through.

I believe that there will be no progress in the lessening of the tension of the Cold War in Western Europe until we have modified or abandoned our program of rearming Western Germany which we evolved in '49 and which we have been pressing upon our allies. You may recall that under our pressure in '52 France evolved the plan of the European Defense Community - the French government evolved it and the French Parliament stalled on it and delayed action on it, and last year it was finally rejected. Prime Minister Eden evolved a modified plan, this time no

longer for a European army but for a German army of some 500,000 men and some 12 divisions under the German General Staff, top control under NATO, and it is at this proposal too which the French people . For the life of me I cannot see why we have centered so much of our foreign policy for the pacification of the world, and this business of rearming West Germany.

Another change on the international scene has been the increased tensions in the Far East. President Eisenhower, who, by the way, has handled the swiftly changing moments on the international scene with remarkable poise and restraint and statesmanship, President Eisenhower last September was opposed to the defending of any of the off-shore islands of China, but a few months later a revision seems to have taken place in his thinking, probably upon the insistance of Chiang, and it was then agreed that the Nationalist Chinese government would evacuate the Tachen Islands, but that the United States would assist in the defense of Quemoy and the Matsu Islands - at least that is the report. It has been reported that the Secretary of State Dulles so informed the Foreign Minister of the Formosa government, and he was told that President Fisenhower would issue a statement to that effect. In the meantime, you will recall, that a Formosa resolution was approved by Congress at the request of the President and it gave the President discretionary power to defend not alone Formosa and the Pescadores but also by implication the related areas - Quemoy and Matsu.

President Eisenhower did not issue such a statement to that effect. I assume that a debate in the Senate which indicated that opposition to the Formosa resolution would have been considerable and determined if assurances were not given that the defense of these islands was involved persuaded the President not to make any commitment with reference to these islands. The situation was left in a clouded and undetermined condition, and the address of Secretary Dulles last Wednesday did not clarify the situation to any appreciable degree. Our country, he declared, had no legal commitments to defend these coastal islands which are really on the threshold of China. On the other hand, he implied that if Red China tried to sieze these

islands as a springboard for the conquest of Formosa, the United States might interfere. He was not in favor of persuading Nationalist China to abandon these islands the same as they had abandoned the Tachen islands.

the United States,

Thus Secretary Dulles left Red China, Nationalist China, as well as the rest of the world guessing as to what was the clear interest and purpose of the American government. And there is always a great danger in such an uncertain political atmosphere for everyone concerned because Chaing seems to be proceeding on the theory that the United States will back him up in Quemoy and the Matsus. He is interpreting Dulles' statement in his own way, and there is ample justification for such an interpretation on his part. Our own people are inclined to interpret it their way, laying stress on that part of Mr. Dulles' statement that said that the U. S. had no clear commitments with regard to these islands but that its responsibilities ended with Formosa and the Pescadores.

Our allies are terribly concerned, for they are inclined to read Dulles' statement as Chiang reads it, and they see in it the danger of the U. S. becoming involved in a war with China which may, conceivably, draw them in too, sooner or later.

There was a time when we declared that even Formosa was not vital to our defense. We have since accepted the dogma that the defense of Formosa is vital to our defense. Under no conditions would we permit its seizure by Red China. We put our 7th Fleet there for that purpose. And our allies, however reluctantly, are prepared to go along with our position as it affects Formosa. They are not prepared to go along with any military action with reference to Quemoy and the Matsus. In the case of Formosa, it was the United States which liberated Formosa from Japan, and Formosa had been in possession of Japan for more than 1/2 century, and certainly the United States and the allies have a right to have a say as to the final and ultimate disposition of Formosa. This is not the case with these coastal islands which have

from time immemorial been a part of the mainland of China.

So a tense and obscure and unclarified situation persists in that part of the world, and that is a source of considerable danger. Red China is not likely to be deterred by our vague threats, and Chiang may be encouraged to find in these unclear utterances of ours the key to a back door to war adventure.

Now in my humble judgment, Chiang should be clearly told to confine his activities and ambitions to Formosa. He has been given the American pledge of security and defense of that island. The people of the U. 5. and of the free world are not looking to him as to a shining knight in armor who is destined to liberate China. It is a pity that our government got itself politically involved with this man whom our own political officials in that part of the world years ago wrote down as a corrupt and incompetent Chinese war-lord.

Some day the United Nations may find a solution for Formosa. For the time being Formosa must remain separated politically from the Chinese mainland, and Red China would do well to understand this and not rattle its saber and fulminate about its immediate intentions to conquer Formosa. It is in no position to conquer Formosa without an all-out war with the United States.

And Chiang Kaishek, on the other hand, should be muzzled and kept from uttering threats about reconquering the Chinese mainland and from engaging in provocative military action which might bring about irreparable and lamentable consequences for the whole world.

I believe that the American policy will clarify itself before long, and I believe that sanity will prevail; the sound military gudgment and experience of our chief executive will guide American policy and will see to it that we do not get involved needlessly and foolishly and criminally in military enterprises such as the defense of these totally unimportant small islands off the Chinese coastline which will mean nothing to the free world. I feel that the moment is not one of panic, that it does not present us, at the moment, with problems that cannot be

solved by calm judgment. As for the long range policy, I believe, as I have expressed now and again, that our policy in Europe as well as our policy toward Red China are in need of re-study and re-definition. They have not been successful, and they have not brought us friends among the nations of the free world. But that is no reflection upon the wisdom or the patriotism of the men in charge of our foreign policy. The world situation today unfortunately is so confused, so fluid, so many unpredictable things that take place in it that it would require prophetic omniscience to hit upon the correct policy at once without going through the painful process of trial and error before we arrive at a clear and a fully defensible policy with reference to that part of the world which we have marked off as being under the influence of Communism. We may be moving towards a position of equilibrium. That will be the first step towards a realization on the part of everybody that there must be found room on this globe for everybody to live on - for all ideologies, and all systems of goernment, that we cannot destroy ideologies with the atom bomb or the hydrogen bomb, for it will not be ideologies that these bombs will destroy - they will destroy the human race.

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