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AMERICAN POLICY IN ASIA

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An address by
Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
at
Marshall College Forum, Huntington, West Virginia
January 16, 1956

The danger to American objectives and interests is as great today in Asia as it was in Europe in 1947. The halting of communism and the development of wide areas of growing strength and stability in Asia is crucial to our position, not only in that part of the world, but also in the Middle East and Europe. It is crucial to the entire world power balance. Unfortunately, many of the fundamental advantages of a common outlook and tradition which we held in Europe in 1947 are not now available to us in Asia.

Almost every informed observer who returns from Asia these days is seriously disturbed by the low state into which our position has fallen, by the steadily growing power and prestige of Communist China, and by the gap which exists between the views commonly expressed in America and those held by other non-Communist peoples not only in Africa and Asia, but also in Europe.

Our diplomacy should have two objectives: first to stabilize and extend the area of freedom, and second, to place on the Communists the responsibility for the cold war tensions that continue to exist.

But recently in an unimaginative and impatient way we have increasingly adopted the attitude in our relations to the billion or more "uncommitted" peoples of the world, that "if they are not for us they are against us."

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At the very same time, the Communists have increasingly adopted the reverse attitude in their relations to the same billion or more "uncommitted" peoples. The Communists say "If they are not against us they are for us".

There is no surer way to make both of these predictions come true than for us to persevere in our present attitude and for the Communists to persevere in theirs. There is no quicker way to lose the Cold War and risk defeat of all we stand for.

Lenin said long ago that "for world Communism the road to Paris lies through Peking and Calcutta." Khrushchev and Bulganin are the most recent and most effective exponents of this approach. Today world Communism is putting a new stress on the Middle World which stretches across Asia from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Japan. The Soviet Union is handling itself with increased skill and steadily improving its position by fraudulently talking in terms of "peace and democracy".

Communist China's dynamic rate of development and her bitter antagonism to the United States make her at least as great a potential threat to peace and stability as the Soviet Union itself. She can appeal to other Asians on an anti-colonial, anti-white, anti-Western basis.

Meanwhile the things Asians hear us say are largely of a military nature. Yet American atomic power, supported by a weak SEATO alliance whose only Asian members are Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines, will be woefully inadequate to cope with Chinese ambitions in Asia over the next generation. An American-dominated, American-managed military program in Asia, if that is all we produce, will inevitably amount to dead end diplomacy.

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Senator Humphrey listed the eight essential ingredients of a new and imaginative Asian policy as follows:

1. A military line must be drawn against Communism in Asia as in Europe, and this line must be defended at all cost. However, it is essential that the line, where drawn, be morally as well as physically defensible, and that it have the clear support of our European allies and at least the unspoken approval of the great majority of non-Communist Asians.

2. This means that we should re-examine our assumption that anybody who can be lined up for a military pact should be lined up, regardless of the consequences. It now appears doubtful that we adequately anticipated the reactions to arms aid to Pakistan. METO and SEATO are still paper organizations; the Russians have capitalized effectively and at little cost to them on the resulting animosities and discontents which these pacts have created elsewhere in the non-Communist world, particularly in India, Burma, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and Egypt.

3. We must learn to identify our interests with those of all free nations -- and not simply the tiny group of nations which accepts our lead willy-nilly. We must develop a realistic colonial policy which faces the realities of the new world situation. Our behavior in Africa now affects our image in Asia. We must start to approach Africa as Africa, and not simply as a projection of Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal. Our consideration of Indo-China as a projection of France, rather than as an Asian problem in its own right, cost us dearly -- and its cost may not yet be over.

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4. To the extent that our present difficulties are the results of our words rather than our actions, simple self-restraint is called for. Administration spokesmen are personally responsible for helping to damage our image in Asia by talking about letting "Asians fight Asians", referring to Goa as a "Portuguese province", and talking about the diplomatic "art" of taking us to the brink of war and then saving us from the situation, as the Secretary of State did this week.

5. We should improve and extend our information services, stressing a positive affirmation of democratic faith with less emphasis on negative, fear-ridden anti-Communism.

6. We should strengthen the morale of our Foreign Service, and improve both the strength and qualifications of American representation in Asia. Recently for nine whole months there was no American Ambassador in critical Burma. Americans with any taint of racism about them should simply not be sent to represent us abroad.

7. A substantial, long-term, economic aid program on an intelligent, partnership basis must be developed for free Asia. Technical assistance, preferably through the United Nations, is essential if the Russians are not to beat us at our own game. I do not want future historians to say that in the period 1956-60, freedom died of a balanced budget.

8. Above all, we must belatedly try to recover common ground between ourselves and strategically placed India and Japan. While living up fully to our other commitments, we must develop a special

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priority approach to ~~these two~~ key nations without which a free, stable Asia is impossible. The Administration's sins of commission and omission in this area are serious.

Japan and India between them have 455 million people, 20% of the world's population. From the point of view of manpower, this is the major Asian counterbalance to China's 580 million. With 75% of Asia's industrial output, millions of skilled and potentially skilled workers, and important natural resources, these two nations are the only effective Asian industrial counter-balance to China. In Gandhi, India has by far the most significant Asian spiritual and ideological counter-balance to communism.

India and Communist China are now involved in an economic race which is terribly important in our future. China is conducting her economic development with forced labor and rigid controls. India is striving to conduct hers democratically, and yet compete with China for results in a similar period of time.

Having sat through a bitter and futile partisan debate over "who lost China?", I for one have no interest in participating in another such debate five years hence over "who lost India" or "who lost Japan". The great hope for an effective counter-balance to China in Asia is India and Japan, with American power in the background. Unless these two key nations remain independent and friendly to us, there is basically little future for the American position in Asia.

Let us recognize this essential fact and act upon it.



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