

COMMON SENSE AND THE COMMON DANGER

Policy Statement of the Committee on The Present Danger

I

Our country is in a period of danger, and the danger is increasing. Unless decisive steps are taken to alert the nation, and to change the course of its policy, our economic and military capacity will become inadequate to assure peace with security.

The threats we face are more subtle and indirect than was once the case. As a result, awareness of danger has diminished in the United States, in the democratic countries with which we are naturally and necessarily allied, and in the developing world.

There is still time for effective action to ensure the security and prosperity of the nation in peace, through peaceful deterrence and concerted alliance diplomacy. A conscious effort of political will is needed to restore the strength and coherence of our foreign policy; to revive the solidarity of our alliances; to build constructive relations of cooperation with other nations whose interests parallel our own—and on that sound basis to seek reliable conditions of peace with the Soviet Union, rather than an illusory detente.

Only on such a footing can we and the other democratic industrialized nations, acting together, work with the developing nations to create a just and progressive world economy—the necessary condition of our own prosperity and that of the developing nations and Communist nations as well. In that framework, we shall be better able to promote human rights, and to help deal with the great and emerging problems of food, energy, population, and the environment.

II

The principal threat to our nation, to world peace, and to the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance based upon an unparalleled military buildup.

The Soviet Union has not altered its long-held goal of a world dominated from a single center—Moscow. It continues, with notable persistence, to take advantage of every opportunity to expand its political and military influence throughout the world: in Europe; in the Middle East and Africa; in Asia; even in Latin America; in all the seas.

The scope and sophistication of the Soviet campaign have been increased in recent years, and its tempo quickened. It encourages every divisive tendency within and among the developed states and between the developed and the underdeveloped world. Simulta-

neously, the Soviet Union has been acquiring a network of positions including naval and air bases in the Southern Hemisphere which support its drive for dominance in the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, Africa, and the South Atlantic.

For more than a decade, the Soviet Union has been enlarging and improving both its strategic and its conventional military forces far more rapidly than the United States and its allies. Soviet military power and its rate of growth cannot be explained or justified by considerations of self-defense. The Soviet Union is consciously seeking what its spokesmen call "visible preponderance" for the Soviet sphere. Such preponderance, they explain, will permit the Soviet Union "to transform the conditions of world politics" and determine the direction of its development.

The process of Soviet expansion and the worldwide deployment of its military power threaten our interest in the political independence of our friends and allies, their and our fair access to raw materials, the freedom of the seas, and in avoiding a preponderance of adversary power.

These interests can be threatened not only by direct attack, but also by envelopment and indirect aggression. The defense of the Middle East, for example, is vital to the defense of Western Europe and Japan. In the Middle East the Soviet Union opposes those just settlements between Israel and its Arab neighbors which are critical to the future of the area. Similarly, we and much of the rest of the world are threatened by renewed coercion through a second round of Soviet-encouraged oil embargoes.

III

Soviet expansionism threatens to destroy the world balance of forces on which the survival of freedom depends. If we see the world as it is, and restore our will, our strength and our self-confidence, we shall find resources and friends enough to counter that threat. There is a crucial moral difference between the two superpowers in their character and objectives. The United States—imperfect as it is—is essential to the hopes of those countries which desire to develop their societies in their own ways, free of coercion.

To sustain an effective foreign policy, economic strength, military strength, and a commitment to leadership are essential. We must restore an allied defense posture capable of deterrence at each significant level and in those theaters vital to our interests. The goal of our strategic forces should be to prevent the use of, or the credible threat to use, strategic weapons in world politics; that of our conventional forces, to prevent other forms of aggression directed against our interests. Without a stable balance of forces in the world and policies of collective defense based upon it, no other objective of our foreign policy is attainable.

As a percentage of Gross National Product, U.S. defense spending is lower than at any time in twenty-five years. For the United States to be free, secure and influential, higher levels of spending are now required for our ready land, sea, and air forces, our strategic deterrent, and, above all, the continuing modernization of those forces through research and development. The increased level of spending required is well within our means so long as we insist on all feasible efficiency in our defense spending. We must also expect our allies to bear their fair share of the burden of defense.

From a strong foundation, we can pursue a positive and confident diplomacy, addressed to the full array of our economic, political and social interests in world politics. It is only on this basis that we can expect successfully to negotiate hardheaded and verifiable agreements to control and reduce armaments.

If we continue to drift, we shall become second best to the Soviet Union in overall military strength; our alliances will weaken; our promising rapprochement with China could be reversed. Then we could find ourselves isolated in a hostile world, facing the unremitting pressures of Soviet policy backed by an overwhelming preponderance of power. Our national survival itself would be in peril, and we should face, one after another, bitter choices between war and acquiescence under pressure.

IV

We are Independents, Republicans and Democrats who share the belief that foreign and national security policies should be based upon fundamental considerations of the nation's future well being, not that of any one faction or party.

We have faith in the maturity, good sense and fortitude of our people. But public opinion must be informed before it can reach considered judgments and make them effective in our democratic system. Time, weariness, and the tragic experience of Vietnam have weakened the bipartisan consensus which sustained our foreign policy between 1940 and the mid-60's. We must build a fresh consensus to expand the opportunities and diminish the dangers of a world in flux.

We have therefore established the Committee on the Present Danger to help promote a better understanding of the main problems confronting our foreign policy, based on a disciplined effort to gather the facts and a sustained discussion of their significance for our national security and survival.

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