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History 1510

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“THE LONG TELEGRAM”

On February 22, 1946, George Kennan who was the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union; wrote a lengthy telegram called the “Long Telegram” to the Secretary of State in Washington D.C. In this document, there are five parts which describe the Soviet Union’s views and policy on the world and how they will interact with other nations and world issues. George Kennan gives insight on the questions during this period concerning the USSR and their mentality. He also gives his views on the country and its people. This document is important because it gives us a look into post WWII problems. It enables a deeper understanding of the relationship between the United States and the USSR with the resulting emergence into the cold war.

The First Part of the document gives a Soviet Propagandist view of the world in which they lived. The Soviet Union expresses that there will be two major world powers: a socialist one and a capitalist one. The Soviet Union and the other nations that believe in socialism will be in a conflict with capitalism over the different views; they believe that both of them cannot live in peace. This is because of the difference in ideology each nation lives by with the Soviet’s concurring that capitalism is corrupted and that the capitalist nations will be in constant conflict. Therefore, the Soviets and their allies must be prepared to defend and weaken the capitalist nations to further expand socialism.

The Second Part of this document gives George Kennan's thoughts on the Soviet propaganda and its views. Kennan states that there are many people in Russia who are friendly to the outside world and have a curiosity for interaction. Also, Kennan points out that capitalist nation and socialist ones can live in peace. "Experience has shown that peaceful and mutually profitable coexistence of capitalist and socialist states is entirely possible." Kennan points out that conflict between capitalist nations don't turn out to become wars and describes the Soviet Union as being backward in its thinking and logic. He believes the propaganda is justification for the Soviets to accomplish their interest in building up socialism and their military power. Then he continues that this way of backwards thinking is caused by Soviet insecurity about itself. This insecurity is brought on by interaction with the West and how the Soviets compare themselves with them. Therefore, the Soviets have a phobia of foreign influence because of this insecurity and the Communist party that rules the Soviets have a difficult time in interacting with Western nations, but also within their own nation as well.

The Third Part of this document outlines Soviet policy on an official level, which means the actions of the USSR will be official in government terms. One of these actions and a main cause for Soviet policy is to strengthen Soviet power militarily, economically, and socially. Soviets will also go to a great deal of trouble to hide their own weaknesses and to keep outside nations from knowing them. The Soviet Union will also push their official power into new areas like other nations that would be pro-Soviet and this in turn would bring the Soviets power further out in the world. Additionally, the Soviet Union will maintain ties to international organizations such as UNO, but not for the common cause of all participating nations, only for Soviet interests. These interests are ones that will strengthen Soviet power, but, as well, will weaken any opposition the Soviets have. Again, the Soviet Union will strive to have official ties with nations

that are opposed to western influences and maintain these ties on an official level. These nations are ones like China and the Middle Eastern nations. Another course the Soviets will take is economic. The Soviet Union will only conduct trade with nations and areas they see secured. Thus, any other nation, they will ignore especially with Western nations. In all of this, the Soviet Union will try very hard to keep in control and influence many to their side.

This Next Part of the document covers actions and policies on an unofficial level, which mean actions on this level the Soviet government does not claim responsibility. However, these actions are ones that the Soviet government has had knowledge of, and, in some way or another, had a part in it. These actions are ones like controlling Communist parties in other countries and making their agenda serve Moscow. They also will try to control and influence organizations in other nations like labor unions, religious groups, social groups, media, and printing and publishing agencies. The Soviets will go to great lengths to achieve power over others to the point of keeping other nations from unification and pitting others against each other. This will help the Soviets keep in control of others and help further their interests. They will do this in secret; and, the government, plus the people in their control, will act as if these actions were all their doing. Another reason for this control was to deter western ideas and influence and keep as a USSR the powerhouse. Additionally, the USSR will exploit the mishap and the mistakes of the Western nations and use these incidents against them. This usually is propaganda and it very negative of other nations that don't support Communism.

The Final Part in this document is the viewpoint of George Kennan and what he thinks the United States should do to counter the Soviet Union. George Kennan suggests that the Soviet Union is strong and relentless in their pursuit for a global communist domination. He also points out that this course that the Soviets are taking is a great threat to the United States and her

allies, if nothing is done about it. He suggests that the United States should approach the Soviets with caution and with confidence in their own power to solve these problems. Additionally, George Kennan points out that the Soviets are strong, but are not in a position to be a great threat and through history it has shown that the USSR is not a risk-taker. So, with careful observation and readiness, the United States should be ok. Kennan then talks about the fact that the Soviets have their own problems that can deter them from getting to dangerous or at least complicate their path. The problem Kennan points out is transfer of power. The example he gives is when Lenin transferred his power to Stalin and therefore, the negative effects of this decision. So, Kennan believes the Soviet have many things to solve before they can be effective in their goals. Kennan also suggests that trying to understand the Soviets and their ways can greatly benefit them and also to educate American about Soviets. Then, we all can have a better understanding about this relationship between the U.S. and USSR. Then Kennan suggests that the people of U.S. need to stay together and be strong and positive. This would make the Soviet cause even harder to accomplish and help the U.S. keep a good outcome in this cold war.

In conclusion, this document has shown that these problems that the U.S. faced were real and very troublesome. Kennan offers good advice on how to deal with the Soviets and their policy in the future. This document has shown the realities of its time and helps us better understand the situation between the United States and the USSR after World War II.