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March 6, 1952

To : The Honorable Dean Acheson
From : Chester Bowles
Subject: Some Proposals on China, India and the East

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Recently I have had several conversations with Nehru and the Foreign Office on the subject of Korea, China and the United States. I have reported these conversations factually by cable, but because of the importance of the issues involved I would like to give you my views on the Asian situation generally as we see it here in India.

In the last few years, we have taken several bold and effective steps to stabilize Europe and to lessen the risk of a Soviet attack in that key area. The food relief programs immediately after the war were followed by the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine as applied in Turkey and Greece, the airlift which broke the embargo on Berlin, the North Atlantic Pact, and now General Eisenhower's vigorous efforts to establish military defense lines strong enough to hold any Soviet attack.

In undertaking this program we have demonstrated imagination, courage, flexibility and will. Although many problems will continue to plague us and our allies for years to come, we have every right to hope that our objectives in Europe are on their way to fulfillment.

However, as Europe becomes stabilized, there is every likelihood that Soviet pressure in Asia will be sharply increased. History does not necessarily repeat itself, but it is interesting to note that in 1878 following Bismarck's rebuff to Russia's Balkan ambitions in the Treaty of Berlin, Russia turned abruptly toward the Far East. When Russia's Asian ambitions were temporarily checked in 1904 by the Japanese at Port Arthur, she shifted her attention again toward the Balkans.

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While Russian strategy in the twenties called for peaceful relations with the western powers, in China she made a bold attempt to capture the Sun Yat-sen revolution and to build a revolutionary Communist China on the Soviet model. Lenin indicated the basis for this policy when he said, "The road to Paris lies through Peking and Calcutta."

Today, Peking is in Communist hands and the Soviet Union has ample reason to believe that if India's great experiment in democracy fails, a Communist victory, not only in India but in what remains of free Asia, will become inevitable.

During the last month or so, the Soviet effort to undermine the political and economic structure of this critical area has steadily increased. In Bombay, the Communist-front industrial exhibit, in spite of its phony trimmings, has convinced hundreds of thousands of Indians of the industrial power of Russia and her satellites, even including the "new China". The Russian delegation to the Film Festival has presented the Soviet cause aggressively and with considerable success in many parts of India.

As the Soviet pressure moves eastward it is inevitable that every effort will be made by the Politburo to bring Communist China under tighter and tighter control and to tie Chinese policies even closer to those of the Soviet Union. Thus the struggle between Communism and democracy in this crucial area is likely to be increased sharply during the next year or so, and there is no basis for easy optimism.

Indeed, the political and economic disintegration of India in the next few years is a live possibility. In many parts of India, the Communists are showing great organizing ability and surprising strength. Today, they stand as the only effective opposition to Nehru and the Congress Party, and the failure of the present government successfully to meet its problems could set in motion a most ominous cycle of events: a Communist India outflanking southeast Asia and the Middle East; the political demoralization of these areas

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resulting in further sweeping Communist successes throughout Asia; a jittery Europe faced with increasing odds and gradually losing its will to fight; the shifting of the world-wide balance of power dangerously against us.

It would be folly to dismiss such a series of defeats as an impossible nightmare. But it would be an equal mistake to overlook the major advantages which are likely to reward a positive, patient, courageous effort in South Asia.

Most thoughtful observers here believe that a successful, democratic India is bound to grow steadily closer to the western nations, and if Communist China embarks on new aggressions, increasingly willing to use its potentially strong military force in cooperation with the United Nations.

Moreover, a successful India would buttress faith in the practical effectiveness of democracy throughout the entire East and put new heart into millions of Asian doubters.

However, we must overcome some major hurdles. Indeed the Soviet challenge in Asia may prove more difficult for us to meet than the much easier to understand Soviet threat to the stability of Europe with which we have been successfully contending. To most Americans, Asia is unfamiliar ground. In dealing with Asian peoples we are unjustly forced to carry the odium of 19th century colonialism, and, with somewhat greater justice, our own failure to treat colored peoples as equals.

Moreover, our experience in Europe has led many of us to consider the Communist danger largely in military terms. The evidence is overwhelming that South Asian nations, at their present stage of development, are opposed to military commitments, and that no South Asian country can be dominated successfully by military force as long as a majority of its people remain poverty-stricken, aloof, and unconvinced. And yet Governor Dewey proposes that we base our hopes for a stable Asia on military alliances with Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

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In my opinion, we are faced with the need for a reassessment of our world strategy with particular emphasis on the developing situation in South Asia, and its relationship to Asia as a whole. As I see it, our policies and objectives can be divided into two parts.

I. India and South Asia

We must do everything possible to win the understanding and support of the people of the non-Communist countries of Asia, and to help them solve the basic problems which now confront their governments. Inevitably, our greatest efforts will be concentrated on India and Japan.

During the last few months, we have made extraordinary progress in creating a new attitude towards America here in India.

Although recent private talks with Nehru have been most encouraging, the best evidence of a change of viewpoint lies in Nehru's recent press conference in which he went out of his way to condemn Communism and "extra-territorial" Communist influences and to express a most friendly attitude towards the United States.

However, much remains to be done. The political future of India will depend to a major extent on the ability of people in the villages to raise their living standards. With sufficient assistance from us and capable administration on the part of the Government, remarkable improvements can be made, with a twenty percent increase in food production in the next four years a practical possibility. To meet this goal of self-sufficiency in food by 1957, the aid program that we have proposed (on the same scale as our 1947-1951 economic aid to Greece) seems an absolute minimum.

But a more efficient agriculture is only part of the story. Additional food, better schooling and improved public health care must be secured in a way that will give the people a sense of achievement and purpose. A better life cannot be handed out on a silver

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platter. The people must be induced to produce it themselves through initiative and hard work. The village-to-village development program, which is the basis for our present aid program, has been designed to meet this objective.

Equally important, the Soviet Union must be met head on in the battle of ideas. The students and young people generally must be given a sense of purpose and of participation in building the "new India." Our own role in this effort to capture the good will and imagination of the young people of India is rapidly taking shape and I believe we can show steady progress in the next few months.

II. India, America and Communist China

Finally, we must clarify our real objectives in Asia beyond any possibility of honest misunderstanding.

Through the United Nations action in Korea we have already made clear our determination to fight aggression in Asia as well as in Europe. What I believe we must do now is to convince the Asian people, including the Chinese, that we earnestly desire peace, that we have no aggressive ambitions on the Chinese mainland, and that we do not like colonialism any better than they do, even though on occasion we are forced to compromise with it temporarily.

This brings us face to face with the question of Communist China, Formosa, and other explosive political questions. There are many pressures which will push us towards policies which are unsound and dangerous. Our ability successfully to surmount those pressures and united our country behind a positive program to stabilize Asia provides a new and exacting test of our leadership and even of our ability to survive in the struggle which confronts us.

It can be argued that there are only two countries in the world which can make peace possible. One of these is the Soviet Union which clearly has no desire for peace, but on the contrary, while avoiding war, will seek to maintain the present critical atmosphere as the best means of furthering the interests of the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement.

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The only other nation which may be in a position to create the conditions necessary for peace is Communist China, and in spite of the strong conviction of many informed people that Communist China has no more desire than the Soviet Union to ease the present world situation, there are several reasons why this possibility should not be wholly discounted.

For more than 100 years, Russia has been in the enviable position of setting its foreign policy without fear or regard to the wishes or views of China. That situation is now changed. Communist China, whether we are ready to admit it or not, is growing constantly more unified and more confident of its position than at any time since before the Taiping Rebellion of 1851.

It is wholly possible that the Soviet Union can deal successfully with the situation in China. Certainly, the Politburo cannot be oblivious to the clear lesson of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the present Chinese Government is headed by doctrinaire Communists, a majority of whom are dedicated to Soviet ideas. The Korean War and the propaganda that has gone with it have established the United States and the Western Powers as the "imperialistic" enemy of all Chinese progress.

But there are also powerful factors working in the opposite direction. China has endured thirty years of civil war, revolution and invasion. China has traditionally resisted change and particularly changes pressed by outsiders. The Chinese social structure is not readily adaptable to Communism. The Soviet Union has rarely been able to adapt itself to new situations and particularly to situations which cannot be solved by force.

Certainly, at the present time there is no concrete evidence that Communist China has any desire to resist the pressure now being applied by the Politburo. And yet with the stakes so high it would be folly to slam the door on the possibility of a gradual change in the present Communist partnership. The development of a more independent China which refuses to play the part of a Russian stooge in Asia seems to represent the only conceivable hope, remote though it may be, of forcing a shift in the aggressive cold war tactics of the Soviet Union.

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As I write this, the truce negotiations in Korea are continuing. Here in Delhi, most observers, both inside and outside the government, believe that the Soviet Union will do everything possible to prevent a truce agreement.

If this is an accurate judgment and an agreement is finally consummated, it may offer some small hope for the future.

However, granting that the possibility of even a moderate shift in Chinese Communist attitudes is remote at this time, it would seem wise for us to do everything possible to help the situation to develop gradually in a way favorable to us, to avoid provocative statements that drive China even closer to Russia, and to leave the door open for improving relationships in the future.

I agree completely with the Department's position on the need for wider military measures if a Korean truce is broken by further aggressive action on the part of the Communist forces. In fact, two weeks ago, I cabled our belief that some means should be found to warn China against further aggression not only in Korea but in Indo-China and Burma as well. My only reservation on this stand is to suggest that the warning be given privately and in moderate language.

However, our proper concern about further aggression should not blind us to the positive possibility, however unlikely, of gradually developing a more satisfactory situation in regard to Communist China. Those who state flatly that China is bound to follow a specific well defined policy, indefinitely and regardless of circumstances, seem to be taking grave risks with their reputations! The wise policy calls for a policy of absolute firmness against aggression while at the same time leaving the way open for one of those dramatic, unexpected turn of events which have occurred on several occasions during the last ten or twelve years.

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What specifically should we do? Let me suggest a line of action for your consideration.

- a. Continue our earnest efforts to gain a truce in Korea.
- b. Avoid provocative statements that play into the hands of the Soviet Union and give the Chinese Communist government "concrete evidence" that we will never rest until their government is destroyed.
- c. Our position has always been to avoid interference with the internal policies of any nation regardless of how distasteful its policies may be, but to oppose with the greatest vigor any aggression across international boundary lines. In line with this policy we should let the Chinese Communist government know that our basic quarrel with them is not what they do in China, but what they have done in Korea and what we fear they may attempt to do in Indo-China and Burma. In our opinion it is vitally important that we make a clear statement of our real intentions in order to correct the very dangerous impression created by the statement which has been attributed to Mr. Dulles.
- d. Continue to do what we can do and say whatever we can say to demonstrate our earnest desire for peace and understanding in Asia and our willingness to work with any non-aggressive government which shares our desire for peace.

Recently, Nehru Bajpai, Menon and others (all of whom are still hopeful that China may eventually reject the role of Soviet stooge) have asked me how Communist China could come to terms with the United States. On a personal and unofficial basis I have answered as follows: First, by cooperating to bring about a truce in Korea; second, by making it clear by action, as well as words, that Communist China has no aggressive

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intent in Burma, Indo-China and Nepal; and third, by acting toward the United Kingdom, and other countries which have already recognized Communist China, in a manner to demonstrate their honest desire for friendly contacts with non-Communist countries.

By pursuing a moderate policy, in strict opposition to aggression, but at all times holding the door open for broader understanding with all Asian countries including China, we will increase, by however little, the hope that China may gradually drift into a somewhat more independent position. But in my opinion an equally persuasive argument in favor of this approach is the fact that even if, as seems likely, these efforts fail to modify Communist China's attitude, our position in Asia will still be immeasurably strengthened.

The failure of an honest effort to ease the present Asian tensions, following a truce in Korea, would give India, Pakistan, Indonesia and other non-Communist Asian countries concrete evidence that in spite of their own and our desire for peace, Communist China is no more anxious for understanding than is Communist Russia.

Specifically, what we need and need badly is a statement by you or the President setting out our policy in Asia; stating that we will oppose aggression boldly whenever it takes place, but that we are anxious for peace and understanding, that we have been traditionally close to the Chinese people, that we have no desire to interfere with the internal problems of Asian countries or any other countries, and that when and if disarmament becomes possible we will further increase our aid to underdeveloped areas.

Such a statement would demonstrate to Asian countries that we have no aggressive plans in Asia and that we are genuinely anxious for peace, and there is no possible way that it could weaken us. If it is attacked by the Republican extremists at home, we will be in the solid position of working earnestly for peace while they are apparently bent on war.

Believe me, Dean, we have made tremendous and almost unbelievable progress in India already. With moderate, imaginative, constructive policies on Asia as a whole,

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and with some of the same courage we have shown in Europe, we can make even greater progress in the next few months.

If by any remote chance our efforts or India's efforts should succeed in encouraging a more independent China, the Soviet Union might feel compelled drastically to modify their policies not only in Asia but in Europe, and peace would be brought immeasurably closer. If, as seems more likely, this effort fails, then India and other Asian countries will at least have been given clear proof that our fears about Communist China are true and that she is no more than a Russian stooge obediently acting her role as an Asian spokesman for a reckless, brutal movement aiming for world domination.

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