

NOV 12 1956

NEW YORK POST

Circ.: e. 399,886

S. 265,066

Front Page

Edit Page

Other Page

Date: NOV 12 1956

Standing Pat on a Powder-Keg

President Eisenhower met the other day with Congressional leaders of both parties for a review of the turmoil confronting humanity in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Although no formal communique was issued at the end of the meeting, a Washington dispatch to The Times offered this remarkable glimpse of what had—and hadn't—taken place at the session:

It was understood that no new United States policies were discussed because none were regarded as needed at the moment.

Judging from the comments of the Democratic statesmen who participated in the meeting, they concurred in this astonishing conclusion. Neither Senate Democratic Leader Lyndon Johnson, reappearing in public after a long strategic silence throughout the election campaign, nor any of his colleagues had any independent opinions to offer.

All this will no doubt be heralded in some places as patriotic bipartisanship. It is, in fact, bipartisan bankruptcy. As this meeting occurred, heroic men and women were risking their lives for liberty in Hungary; granted that the choices we face are difficult, dare any one smugly proclaim that "no new policies are needed at the moment"?

In the Middle East it is increasingly plain that there can be no real armistice unless we insist that the Arab states finally agree to negotiate an over-all settlement with Israel. We have condemned the Israeli act of aggression; but such censure can hardly be effective if we are unwilling to demand that the Arabs end their eight-year declared war.

On these and other fronts there must be affirmative, coherent programs. If the Administration cannot furnish any new ideas, it is up to the Democrats to raise their voices. The phrase "no new policies needed" reflects a terrifying vacuum in high places; it is incredible that Lyndon Johnson should seem to accept this formula as his own.

* * *

For a few brief hours on Saturday there appeared to be hope that the Administration was recognizing the urgent need for fresh talent in the field of foreign policy. It was reported that Walter Bedell Smith, the able former Under Secretary of State, had been named as a special aide to the President. But the good news was abruptly and vehemently denied by the White House.

So Herbert Hoover Jr. remains in command of the State Department "team." As long as he is in charge we shall continue to hear that no new policies are being moulded; and as long as Johnson holds his post as Senate Democratic spokesman, the country will get little original thought or courageous dissent from the Democrats.

How long can we afford the luxury of sterile inaction camouflaged as high-minded bipartisanship?

The campaign is over; but the crisis endures. It will not be met by pretending that all our troubles were resolved at the polls.