

## **REITH LECTURES 1957: Russia, the Atom and the West**

**George Kennan**

### **Lecture 5: The Non-European World**

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Ever since I had the temerity to mention the possibility of a political settlement in Europe, people have been saying to me: 'Yes, but the Russians don't want a settlement'. I have not denied this; on the other hand I cannot confirm it. I do not think we know what the Russians do want; and I doubt that we are likely to find it out, so long as we persist in picturing it as something that exists in the abstract, independently of our own position and of what we might or might not be prepared to do in given contingencies.

But I think we might note that the Russian attitude in this question is going to be determined currently not just in the light of the situation in Europe but also in the light of developments in that great arc of territory that runs from China's southern frontier around through southern Asia and the Middle East to Suez and the north of Africa. Throughout this area things have generally been moving in recent years in a manner favourable to Soviet interests and unfavourable to our own. I can well understand that people in Moscow might wish to wait until they can see with greater clarity how far this process is going to carry before they give serious consideration to a settlement in Europe. Why should the Kremlin commit itself in Europe so long as it feels that it has a good chance of turning our flank by the exploitation of our weakness in other areas?

There are significant differences between the situation in this southern band of states and the situation in Europe or in the area of Japan or Korea. In these places both we and the Russians have rights and formal relationships which cannot be unilaterally altered; and a future permanent status of these areas cannot very well be worked out except by negotiation and agreement between us. In the southern band of states, on the other hand, the formal status of the respective countries is not generally at stake, and there is little substance for negotiation between ourselves and Russia. Our problem in that part of the world is primarily one of the attitudes of the peoples who inhabit it. The things Moscow has been doing there—whether it be shipping arms or giving technical aid or making offers of trade or sending delegations around—however disturbing they may seem, are not things to which we can take formal objection. They are ones that are technically within the limits of international propriety. We do such things ourselves. We cannot ask the Russians to promise not to do them.

If the western position has been deteriorating in many parts of this area, this is because the peoples there have themselves been reacting in ways unfavourable to our interests. Moscow has been gratefully taking advantage of these reactions. But this is not a state of affairs which we can hope to improve by talking to people in Moscow. The Soviet leaders will see no reason—and I must confess that I can see none myself from their standpoint—why they should pass up golden opportunities to increase their own prestige and influence in an area which is largely uncommitted and of immense

political importance. If the states of mind prevalent among the peoples of this area present Moscow with just such opportunities, this is a problem which we must tackle on the plane of our relationship with these peoples, not on the plane of our relationship with Moscow.

What are these attitudes which have played so powerfully into the Soviet's hands? They are difficult to describe because they assume so many forms. They vary from country to country— sometimes even from class to class. They differ with respect to their objects. The feelings directed to Englishmen, for example, are not always the same as those directed to Americans. Their origins lie in such diverse things as the emotional legacy of colonialism, resentments arising out of the colour problem, jealousy over the material successes and outward affluence of certain Western countries, notably the United States, frustrations experienced by people who are for the first time bearing the responsibilities of power, an easy acceptance of Marxist clichés and symbols, and various prejudices and misapprehensions relating both to Russian society and to our own.

### **Irresponsible New Nationalism**

Added to this are the impulses of a violent and sometimes irresponsible new nationalism—a nationalism which Moscow, having little to lose, has not hesitated to encourage, whereas the Western Powers, having more at stake, have been obliged to view it with concern and even to oppose it on a number of occasions. Finally, because all political reactions are in a sense cumulative, there has been a widespread impression throughout these regions that the West, whatever its merits or deficiencies, was in any case on the decline, whereas the star of Moscow was rising; and this has not failed to impress that sizable portion of mankind which has more respect for power and success than it has for principle.

In this bundle of impulses and reactions there is, in fact, something for everyone— something to appeal to every type of mind; and it is small wonder that it has all added up to a massive anti- Western complex, a complex in which a sneaking admiration for Western institutions and a desire to emulate them are mixed with a special, irritated sensitivity, an instinctive longing to see Western nations shaken and humbled, and a frequent inability to balance with any degree of realism the advantages of association with the West against those of association with Moscow. It is these states of mind, not what Moscow is doing to take advantage of them, which lie at the heart of our problem.

In this description of the origins of anti-Western feeling I did not mention our own mistakes. This is not because we have not made any—as we all know, there has been no lack of them; it is simply because I doubt that our mistakes have been among the root causes of this condition. I believe that this anti-Western animus has been primarily subjective in origin, and would have been there whatever we had done. On the other hand, there have been several tendencies in our recent behaviour which certainly have not made things any better, and which I am afraid we have to face up to.

### **Expecting Too Much**

First of all, we have expected too much. Many of us seem to have believed that Russian influence could and should be excluded completely from this entire area. This attitude is surely unrealistic. It is perfectly natural that Russia, occupying the geographical position she does and being the Great Power she is, should have her place and her voice there too. By trying to persuade people that Russian influence has no place anywhere in this part of the world, we prepare in advance our own psychological defeats for the day when this turns out not to be in accord with political reality.

In addition to being unrealistic, this anxiety about Russian influence is often either unnecessary or exaggerated. Some of us seem to believe that no country can have anything to do with Moscow, even in the most normal ways, without at once losing its independence. Such a view exaggerates the sinisterness of Moscow's immediate purposes, which actually embrace a number of quite normal elements. It also involves an underestimation of the talent of Asian and African statesmen for seeing through the more dangerous long-term aspirations of international communism and protecting their countries against them. Left to themselves, many of these statesmen would surprise us, I am sure, by their ability to take the measure of Moscow's motives and methods and to find resources of their own with which to protect the integrity of their national life.

I say 'left to themselves' because it seems to me that we Americans, in particular, have not helped matters by sometimes showing ourselves over-anxious about all this, by fussing over people, by acting as though it was we, rather than they, who had the most to lose if they went too far in their relations with Moscow. We have sometimes contrived to give them the impression that they would be reasonably safe, in fact, in playing close to the edge of danger, because if they got too close we could always be depended upon to come rushing in and rescue them with one sort of aid or another. We have even created a situation here and there where people believe they can exploit the threat of an unwise intimacy with Moscow as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon us. In this way, we have actually succeeded in dulling, to our own disadvantage, the sense of realism which these governments might normally have brought to their relations with the Soviet Union.

We have, at the same time, done less than justice to our own position; for we have contrived to give an impression of weakness and jitteriness which has no justification in the realities of our situation. When suggestions are made to us that if aid of one sort or another was not forthcoming, people will, as the saying goes, 'go Communist', surely, there is only one answer: 'Very well then, go. Our interests may suffer, but yours will suffer first'. I sometimes wonder whether it is not true that only those are really worth helping who are determined to survive and to succeed whether one helps them or not.

### **Psychological and Political Dangers**

Another mistake that we have made is to treat as though they were purely military problems dangers that were actually mainly psychological and political. Of all the countries of this great area, only certain ones in the Middle East have a common border with Russia; and even here I have not seen the evidence of a Soviet intention to

launch any overt military aggression. There is, of course, what one might call a problem of ultimate defence in this area; and perhaps military pacts of one sort or another do have their usefulness in meeting it. But this is a problem which could become real only as part of a general war; to confuse it with the protection of this area from Communist penetration and domination in time of peace is simply to defeat our own purposes. To me one of the most puzzling phenomena of this post-war era has been the unshakable conviction of so many people that the obvious answer to the threat of a growth of Communist influence is a military alliance or a military gesture.

The demands frequently made upon us by the independent countries of the world seem to me to run something like this: 'We', they say, 'are determined to have economic development and to have it at once. For us, this is an overriding aim, an absolute requirement; and we are not much concerned about the method by which it is achieved. You in the West owe it to us to let us have your assistance and to give it to us promptly, effectively, and without conditions; otherwise we will take it from the Russians, whose experience and methods we suspect anyway to be more relevant to our problems'. In response to this approach, a great many people in my own country have come to take it for granted that there is some direct relationship between programmes of economic aid on the one hand and political attitudes on the other—between the amount of money we are willing to devote to economic assistance in any given year and the amount of progress we may expect to make in overcoming these troublesome states of mind I have been talking about.

This thesis, as well as the reaction to it at home, seems to me to be questionable at every point. I find myself thrown off at the very start by this absolute value attached to rapid economic development. Why all the urgency? It can well be argued that the pace of change is no less important than its nature, and that great damage can be done by altering too rapidly the sociological and cultural structure of any society, even where these alterations maybe desirable in themselves. In many instances one would also like to know how this economic progress is to be related to the staggering population growth with which it is associated. Finally, many of us in America have seen too much of the incidental effects of industrialisation and urbanisation to be convinced that these things are absolute answers to problems anywhere, or that they could be worth any sacrifice to obtain. For these reasons I cannot fully share the basic enthusiasm on which this whole thesis is founded.

### **No Cosmic Guilt for Underdevelopment**

I must also reject the suggestion that our generation in the West has some sort of a cosmic guilt or obligation vis-à-vis the underdeveloped parts of the world. The fact that certain portions of the globe were developed sooner than others is one for which I, as an American of this day, cannot accept the faintest moral responsibility; nor do I see that it was particularly the fault of my American ancestors. I cannot even see that the phenomenon of colonialism was one which could be regarded as having given rise to any such state of obligation. The establishment of the colonial relationship did not represent a moral action on somebody's part; it represented a natural and inevitable response to certain demands and stimuli of the age. It was simply a stage of history. It generally took place with the agreement and connivance of people at the colonial end as well as in the mother-country. Nor were the benefits derived from this relationship in any way one-sided. The Marxists claim that colonialism invariably represented a

massive and cruel exploitation of the colonial peoples. I am sure that honest study would reveal this thesis to be quite fallacious. Advantages, injuries and sacrifices were incurred on both sides. Today these things are largely bygone. We will do no good by scratching around to discover whose descendants owe the most to the descendants of the other. If we are to help each other in this world, we must start with a clean slate.

I can well understand that there are instances in which it will be desirable for us from time to time to support schemes of economic development which are soundly conceived, which give promise, over the long run, of yielding greater stability and a new hopefulness for the countries concerned. I trust that we will not let such demands go unanswered when they arise. There is no fonder hope in the American breast, my own included, than that the experience we have had in developing a continent will prove relevant and helpful to others. Every American would like to see us take a useful part in solving problems of economic development elsewhere in the world. But action of this sort can be useful only if it proceeds on a sound psychological basis. If there is a general impression in the recipient countries that American aid represents the paying of some sort of a debt from us to them, then the extension of it can only sow confusion. The same is true if it is going to be interpreted as a sign of weakness on our part or of a fear that others might go over to the Communists, or if it is going to be widely attacked in the recipient countries as evidence of what the Communists have taught people to refer to as 'imperialism', by which they seem to mean some sort of intricate and concealed foreign domination, the exact workings of which are never very clearly explained.

### **Economic Aid**

Unless such reactions can be ruled out, programmes of economic aid are apt to do more harm than good, psychologically; and it ought properly to be the obligation of the recipient governments and not of ourselves to see that these misinterpretations do not occur. To those who come to us with requests for aid one would like to say: 'You tell us, first, how you propose to assure that if we give you this aid it will not be interpreted among your people as a sign of weakness or fear on our part, or of a desire to dominate you'.

These are not the only psychological dangers of foreign aid. There is the basic fact that any form of benevolence, if prolonged for any length of time (even in personal life this is true), comes to be taken for granted as a right and its withdrawal resented as an injury. There is the fact that any programme of economic development represents a change in the terms of competition within a country and brings injury to some parties while it benefits the others. It is hard to aid any other country economically without its having an effect on internal political realities there—without its redounding to the benefit of one political party and the disadvantage of another.

All these considerations incline me to feel that, desirable as programmes of foreign aid may sometimes be from the long-term standpoint, their immediate psychological effects are apt to be at best mixed and uncertain. For this reason, foreign aid, as a general practice, cannot be regarded as a very promising device for combating, over

the short term, the psychological handicaps under which Western statesmanship now rests in Asia and Africa.

Finally, I do not think for a moment that the Soviet Union really presents the alternative people seem to think it presents to a decent relationship with the West. Moscow has its contribution to make to what should be a common task of all the highly industrialised countries; and there is no reason why this contribution should not be welcomed wherever it can be helpful. But Moscow is not exactly the bottomless horn of plenty it is often held to be; and it is rather a pity that it has never been required to respond all at once to the many expectations directed to it. We ourselves should be the last, one would think, to wish to spare it this test. The results might be both healthy and instructive.

### **The Middle East**

What, then, is there to be done about these feelings of people in Asia and Africa? Very little, I am afraid, over the short term, except to relax, to keep our composure, to refuse to be frightened by the Communism alternative, to refrain from doing the things that make matters worse, and to let things come to rest, as in the end they must, on the sense of self-interest of the peoples concerned. The only place where we have an urgent and dangerous problem today, which admittedly demands something more than the long-term approach, is the Middle East.

Here, it seems to me, the essence of Western policy must lie in preventing the unsettled state of this area from leading to world war. It would be wholly unrealistic, I think, to suppose that the future development of relationships here can occur everywhere without violence. If we are going to go on bestowing the quality of absolute sovereignty on new political entities at the rate of approximately one a year, as we have been doing for the past fifty years, without much regard to the degree of political maturity and experience which they bring to the exercise of this responsibility, then I think we must expect that armed conflict on a local scale is going to continue to be a frequent feature of the political scene in any area of the world where these raw sovereignties predominate. The Middle East is such an area. On top of this general situation we have, in this instance, a special and most tragic source of instability in the failure of the Arab world to accept the establishment of the State of Israel.

It has long been a common platitude of international discourse, despite much evidence to the contrary, that peace is indivisible. I should certainly hope that this is not true of the Middle East; for, if it were, there would be little chance of avoiding a world war. Our concern should surely be not to seek the answer to all Middle Eastern problems by undertaking to involve in their solution the armed forces of the Great Powers, but precisely to find ways by which this can be avoided. Any entry of Russian or American forces into the Middle East, whether under United Nations' auspices or not, will produce reactions elsewhere which it would be better not to arouse.

Let us, of course, do everything we can to discourage hostilities in that part of the world. To this end let us seek to reconcile and unify where we can, not to divide. But let us at the same time be careful not to place ourselves in a position where such hostilities as cannot be avoided would inevitably have to involve us all. Short of the

entry of Soviet troops into this area, there is nothing that could happen there that would be worth the cost of a world war. With anything else, we could eventually cope.

It will be pointed out that the security of the Western world not only can be, but is being, jeopardised by the fact that local regimes strongly hostile to the Western Powers and vulnerable to Soviet influence control resources and facilities that are important, if not vital, to our security. This is, of course, the situation that prevails today in Egypt and Syria. It could prevail elsewhere tomorrow. I can see only one answer to this situation which would not enhance the chances of a world war: and that is that we should act with determination to reduce our dependence on the resources and facilities that are in question. This can be done in a number of ways; and each of them should probably have some place in Western policy. It can be done by cultivating alternatives to the use of these raw-material sources or facilities; it can be done by stock-piling; it can be done, in certain instances, by placing minor limitations on consumption at home. These possibilities were extensively discussed, and to some extent practised, at the time of the Suez crisis; I can see no reason why they should be ignored today. Their purpose would not be to free the Western countries entirely from the use of Middle Eastern oil or the Suez Canal. Nothing so drastic would be necessary. The purpose would be to give us greater flexibility in our dealings with the countries concerned and to restore to the West in general something of that basic bargaining power which was so woefully and conspicuously lacking at the time of Suez.

### **Development of Alternatives**

The fact is that until we learn better how to live without some of these people we shall find it hard to learn to live with them. I was never able to understand why we were in such a hurry, a year ago, to be permitted to repair the Suez Canal and the Syrian pipeline at our own expense—and this at a time when we were doing much better than people thought we should in learning to get along without them. We were on the right road; this road is still open to us today. I am sure that we would not have to go very far in the development of alternatives to an unhealthy reliance on the oil and facilities of the Middle East before we would see in the reactions of the governments concerned signs of a new and more realistic sense of self-interest.

I have no illusion that this development of alternatives will be easy for us to accomplish. It involves all those things that seem to be most difficult for our governments in times other than those of the most pressing danger. It involves intimate Anglo-American collaboration, not just sporadically in occasional conferences but in day-to-day operations. It involves the co-ordination of the operations of great private concerns with those of government. It may well even involve measures of domestic self-denial— a thing which for some reason our peoples seem to regard as unthinkable except in moments of greatest military extremity.

I am sorry that the demand is such a harsh one. But it represents actually only a small part of that obligation of greater national discipline that we are now going to have to accept generally if we are to have any hope of making headway in our competition with Russia.

### **The Dust and Heat**

People talk a great deal these days about the need for a new sense of urgency, and they are right to do so. I believe that this competition can be carried forward successfully without the disasters of another war. But I do not believe for a moment that this is a race which is to be run without dust and heat. It is the essence of our present situation that the dust and the heat must be incurred now, in a period of nominal peace and outward normality; they will do us no good if we wait, this time, to the last moment. If such things as a tighter economic discipline and a curb on certain forms of consumption in our countries is the price of the restoration of a sound Western position in the competition with Soviet power, I think it a cheap one compared with what else is at stake.

Measures along the lines I have suggested here will not bring us success everywhere. The deterioration has been in some respects greater than we like to admit. There will be instances where it will be best for us to cut our losses; and in this case I see no reason why the burden should not be fairly shared throughout the Atlantic Pact community. But what is important is that the dignity of the Western position in Asia and Africa should be restored and that the situation should be stabilised at some point. With the proper investment of realism and determination, such a point can, I am sure, be established. The diplomatic assets of Western Europe and North America are not yet so small that they would not suffice, under co-ordinated and purposeful direction, to accomplish this purpose. Once people in Moscow see that such a point does exist, and that what lies to our side of it is enough to assure our security and to leave us the ability to carry on indefinitely as a major factor in world affairs—once they see, in other words, that we are not really to be outflanked in the Asian and African theatres or any other—then I am sure they will not be long in appreciating the advantages to themselves of a fair settlement of political differences in the key areas of Europe and North-east Asia.