

In reply to my remarks in making the presentation, he spoke of the effect of the awards as strengthening still further the friendship between the Soviet Union and the United States and referred to the conference that opened yesterday in Washington,³³ the success of which, he said, was assured by the good will of the peace-loving countries and the consciousness of the need of real guarantees against the instigators of new wars.

He stayed for an hour and we had a most cordial conversation. He said that he had received favorable reports of the opening of the conversations in Washington. He spoke with great respect of the Secretary and the work he did at the Moscow Conference³⁴ in laying the foundations for the present discussions.

He said that Marshal Stalin had a very high personal esteem for the President and was confident that he was in agreement with the President on all fundamental questions.

HARRIMAN

861.00/2-1445

*Memorandum by the Counselor of Embassy in the Soviet Union
(Kennan)*

[Extracts]

Moscow, September 1944.

RUSSIA—SEVEN YEARS LATER³⁵

It is characteristic of the contradictory quality of all Russian reality that one can argue whether it is more presumptuous to write about Russia after a long presence or after a long absence. Each doubtless has its values. Each also has its risks. It is the latter that I propose to undertake in this paper; and in justification of it I can cite only the subtlety of all change in a country where the relationship between public feeling and official policy, between motive and action, between cause and effect, is a jealously guarded secret of state. This subtlety often makes invisible to the permanent resident of Moscow the movement of the society in which he lives. He himself moves with the stream; everything that he sees moves with him; and like the navigator at sea he has no subjective perception of the current upon which he is borne. This is why it is sometimes easier for someone who leaves and returns to estimate the speed and direction of movement, to seize

³³ The Conference on International Peace and Security Organization had opened at Dumbarton Oaks. For correspondence on this conference, see vol. 1, pp. 713 ff.

³⁴ For correspondence on the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, October 18–November 1, 1943, see *Foreign Relations*, 1943, vol. 1, pp. 513 ff.

³⁵ George F. Kennan had been Second Secretary of Embassy in the Soviet Union, 1935–1937.

and fix the subtleties of trend. And this, incidentally, is why no foreign observer should ever be asked to spend more than a year in Russia without going out into the outside world for the recovery of perspective.

If political conditions are quiet internally, the same cannot be said for foreign policy. Ever since the conclusion of the purges and the establishment of Stalin's power beyond question in the internal political life of the country, the political effort of the Kremlin has concentrated in increasing measure on relations of Russia to the outside world.

It is depressing to reflect how many volumes could be filled with the speculation that has appeared in the foreign press during the past two years on Russia's foreign political aims. The questions involved have been repeated with a monotony that almost discourages the attempt to answer. Has Russian policy changed? Does Russia want to "communize" other countries? Does Russia propose to "cooperate"? Etc., etc.

These questions are one which, in the Soviet view, are very elementary. The reader must, therefore, not take it amiss if the answers are the same.

Soviet leaders have never forgotten the weak and vulnerable position in which the Soviet regime found itself in the early days of its power. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk,³⁶ the intervention of Allied forces in various parts of Russia, the repulse of the Red Army from the Baltic States, the invasion of the Western provinces in the Polish-Russian war of 1920; all these left in Soviet minds an indelible and undoubtedly exaggerated impression of the dangers which threatened Soviet power from without. Fed by the traditional Russian mistrust of the stranger, and reinforced by the continual reverses suffered in the early attempts to increase Russian power through communization, this feeling of fear and insecurity lived and flourished and came to underlie almost all Soviet thought about the outside world.

In the early years of communism it was still officially held, and widely believed, that Russia could and would be saved from what was felt to be its perilous predicament by the growing conflicts between the imperialist powers and by the world revolution which was bound to ensue. Orders given to foreign communist parties to direct their efforts to the earliest possible achievement of social and political revolution were therefore considered to serve the cause of Soviet military security as well as the broader purposes of communist ideology. To

³⁶ For documentation on the conclusion of the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed March 3, 1918, between the Central Powers and the Soviet government of Russia, see *Foreign Relations*, 1918, Russia, vol. 1, pp. 404–476; and for text of the treaty, see *ibid.*, p. 442.

Stalin's own sense of realism must go the credit for the gradual appreciation that not only were there no real chances for the success of this world revolutionary undertaking, but that the communist parties operating under such instructions were actually of less practical advantage to the Soviet Union than the groups of bourgeois-liberal enthusiasts for whom—somewhat to Moscow's own surprise—the Soviet Union soon came to have so powerful an attraction. Soviet policy thus began with time to lay less stress on the immediate bringing about of revolution in other countries and began to concentrate on using all foreign sympathizers, communist and otherwise, as vehicles for a purely nationalistic Soviet foreign policy. That was indeed a change, and an important change. But it did not alter the basic conception of Soviet policy, which was to increase in every way and with all possible speed the relative strength of the Soviet Union in world affairs, and to exploit to the utmost for this purpose the rivalries and differences between other powers.

During the years just preceding Hitler's rise to power in Germany the Kremlin, enamoured of its role as the innocent object of evil designs, began—like Shakespeare's lady—to protest too much. It fussed and fumed about the dangers of capitalistic encirclement and about the plans for "intervention" on the part of the "Anglo-French imperialists". It held propaganda trials to impress the population with the proximity of these dangers. All realists knew that the substance behind these fears was not great, and that the value of this constant beating of the alarm lay rather in the stimulus as it might bring to the domestic efforts of the Russian population than in the meeting of any real need for national defense. But it served its purpose in large measure, and the Soviet leaders succeeded in convincing many people, themselves included, that mortal danger was at hand.

With Hitler's rise to power, the Kremlin—having cried "wolf" largely out of ulterior motives for a number of years—suddenly found a real wolf at the door. What had once been declamation now became grim reality. During the years from 1933 to 1938, it was well understood in Moscow that the Soviet Union did not have the strength to sustain alone, without aid from outside, a German attack. It seemed to Russian minds, therefore, that the best chance of safety lay in inducing somebody else to fight Hitler before his plans for aggression in the east could develop. Had not Lenin himself said that the "contradictions between the imperialist powers" should always be ruthlessly exploited in the interests of communism? Perhaps this was not only Russia's mortal danger but also Russia's golden opportunity, depending on how it was played.

The result was a sudden enthusiasm for collective security. The Soviet press developed marked solicitude for the precarious position of the western democracies in the face of the Nazi menace. The Soviet Union joined the League of Nations. Litvinov went to Geneva, spoke eloquently of the dangers of aggression, of the indivisibility of peace and of the hopelessness of supposing that war, once begun, would not become universal. The western powers, he argued, should agree to fight at the first sign of German aggression anywhere. He advanced one legalistic formula after another, designed to assure that there could be no German aggression which would not involve the western powers. He was generous in his offers to join anyone and everyone in pacts of mutual assistance.

In all of this, there was no real evidence that Moscow had any serious intention of undertaking major military activities on anyone else's behalf. Traditional Russian preoccupation with the *interpretation* rather than the *letter* of an agreement quickly suggested to the Russian mind that there could be little danger in incurring obligations which Russia herself would be able to interpret unilaterally when the time came to deliver. The main thing was to assure that Germany could not fight in the east without fighting in the west. Once military complications in that theatre were assured, Russia could take care of herself.

This, incidentally, is the answer to the Russian attitude at the time of Munich.³⁷ Russia, on the precedent of the Spanish War, would have been glad to give token military assistance to Czechoslovakia—particularly in the air. There was no will—and, as the Germans well knew, no possibility—for the despatch of any sizeable ground force to Czechoslovakia at that time.

Litvinov's efforts tided over a difficult period, during which both German and Russian armaments were built up. But they did not succeed in drawing the western powers into obligations which would compel them to fight Hitler if the latter embarked on a policy of expansion; and the chances of accomplishing this looked progressively dimmer as Nazi power increased and western appeasement continued. If Russia could not rely on the western nations to save her, it then seemed to Russian minds that the alternative lay not only in the utmost development of Russian military power within the 1938 borders, but also in new territorial acquisitions designed to strengthen Russia's

³⁷ For documentation relating to the German-Czechoslovak crisis of 1938, see *Foreign Relations*, 1938, vol. I, pp. 483 ff; and for text of the agreement signed at Munich on September 29, 1938, between Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy, see *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1969*, Third Series, vol. II (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), p. 627, or *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, series D, vol. II (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 1014.

strategic and political position, and in the creation of a sphere of influence even beyond these limits. In drawing up this expansionist program, Soviet planners leaned heavily on the latter-day traditions of tsarist diplomacy.

The experience of Munich, at which moment the nightmare of an isolated German-Russian war seemed close to becoming reality, finally dispelled all serious hopes in the prospects of inducing the western world to fight Hitler except in direct self-defense, and the stage reached at that moment in the military industrialization of Russia lent justification to the final junking of Litvinov's tenuous program. The road was now open for a policy of open territorial expansion, designed if possible to forestall attack on Russia, but at any rate to soften the shock of the attack when it came. In this way it came about that the Kremlin, in the summer of 1939, rejected the advances of the western powers,³⁸ who had neither the will nor the strength to hand over whole sections of the eastern Europe to the Soviet Union, and accepted the advances of the Germans,³⁹ in whom neither this will nor this strength were lacking.

It would be useful to the western world to realize that despite all the vicissitudes by which Russia has been afflicted since August 1939, the men in the Kremlin have never abandoned their faith in that program of territorial and political expansion which had once commended itself so strongly to Tsarist diplomatists, and which underlay the German-Russian non-aggression pact of 1939. The program meant the re-establishment of Russian power in Finland and the Baltic states, in eastern Poland, in the northern Bukovina, and in Bessarabia. It meant a protectorate over western Poland, and an access to the sea for the Russian empire somewhere in East Prussia. It meant the establishment of dominant Russian influence over all the Slavs of central Europe and the Balkans, and, if possible, the creation of a corridor from the western to the southern Slavs somewhere along the border between Austria and Hungary. Finally, it meant Russian control of the Dardanelles through the establishment of Russian bases at that point. This program was intended not only to increase the physical military strength of Russia. It was intended to prevent the formation in central and eastern Europe of any power or coalition of powers capable of challenging Russian security.

It was considered in Moscow in 1939 that if a portion of this program could be realized by an agreement with the Germans such as

³⁸ For the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations attempting to reach an agreement against aggression, see *Foreign Relations*, 1939, vol. I, pp. 232 ff.

³⁹ Concerning the improvement of German-Soviet relations culminating in the Treaty of Nonaggression signed at Moscow on August 23, 1939, see *ibid.*, pp. 312 ff.; and for text of the treaty, with secret, additional protocol, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, series D, vol. VII, pp. 245-247.

was actually concluded, an agreement which would at the same time turn the point of German weapons toward the west, this would be a handsome achievement. While it was recognized that it would hardly prevent the growth of a power in central Europe dangerous to Russia, it did seem to assure that that power would first exhaust itself against the western nations, and would in any event not be turned against Russia alone.

The course of the war proved a bitter disappointment to this line of Russian thought. The west collapsed rapidly, without having brought any serious exhaustion to German military power. Hitler turned out to be in a position to turn a large portion of German strength against Russia in a period of quiescence of military activity in the west. And the territorial gains of the non-aggression pact proved to have little real military value. The Russians lost their eastern half of Poland more rapidly, when the time came, than the Poles had lost their western half in 1939. What minor strategic advantages the newly acquired territories might have brought were at least partially balanced off by the ruin of the national armies they had once supported. If still in existence, these armies might have taken up at least some of the shock of the German attack. Their disappearance, to which Russia herself had so largely contributed, left the Red Army face to face with the Reichswehr.

But all these reversals failed to shake Russian confidence in the ultimate efficacy of this policy of expansion. The Russian conclusion was not that the policy had been unsound. It was rather that it had not been carried far enough. When, after the first war winter, the prospects of victory began to grow on the horizon, Russian minds saw the possibility of completing successfully in 1945 what had been unsuccessfully begun in 1939. This time there would be no powerful Germany to be reckoned with. An exhausted and war-torn eastern Europe would provide a plastic and yielding mass from which the objectives of Russian statesmanship could easily be moulded.

Until June 1944, however, all such Russian aims had to await the exertion of a real military effort by the western powers. Without that effort, not even Russian victory was assured. The second front was a paramount requirement of all Russian policy. The suspicious Russian mind naturally exaggerated the danger of Russia's being left in the lurch by her western Allies. To offset this danger the Kremlin was prepared to go a long way to meet the requirements and the prejudices of the western world.

Western conceptions of future collective security and international collaboration seemed naive and unreal to the Moscow eye. But if talking in unreal terms was the price of victory, why not? If the western world needed Russian assurances of future collaboration as

a condition of military support, why not? Once satisfied of the establishment of her power in eastern and central Europe (and who, after all, would be able to prevent the establishment of that power when the day of German collapse arrived?) Russia would presumably not find too much difficulty in going through whatever motions were required for conformity with these strange western schemes for collaboration in the preservation of peace. What dangers could collaboration bring to a country which already held in its hand the tangible guarantees of its own security? On the contrary, if it were properly exploited, participation in arrangements for world security might even be made into a form of re-insurance for the protection of Russia's interests. Considerations of prestige, furthermore, would demand that Russia not be missing from any of the counsels of the world powers.

In this way, thoughts of international collaboration settled down only too easily beside dreams of empire in minds schooled from infancy to think and deal in even sharper contradictions than these. As long as no second front existed, expediency suggested that the idea of collaboration be kept rather to the fore, the idea of spheres of interest rather in the background. But when the second front became reality, there was no longer any need for excessive delicacy. The resultant bluntness of Soviet policy has caused some surprise and questioning in the west.

People at home would find Soviet words and actions easier to understand if they would bear in mind the character of Russian aims in eastern and central Europe. Russian efforts in this area are directed to only one goal: power. The form this power takes, the methods by which it is achieved: these are secondary questions. It is a matter of indifference to Moscow whether a given area is "communist" or not. All things being equal, Moscow might prefer to see it communized, although even that is debatable. But the main thing is that it should be amenable to Moscow influence, and if possible to Moscow authority. If this can be achieved inconspicuously, with the acquiescence of most of the inhabitants and through a concealed form, so much the better. If not, it will be achieved by other means. For the smaller countries of eastern and central Europe, the issue is not one of communism or capitalism. It is one of the independence of national life or of domination by a big power which has never shown itself adept at making any permanent compromises with rival power groups. Neither the behavior of Red Army occupying forces nor the degree of "communization" of the country is any criterion of the eventual outcome of this issue. It is not a question of boundaries or of constitutions or of formal independence. It is a question of real power relationships, more often than not carefully

masked or concealed. As such—and in no other way—should it be judged.

Today, in the autumn of 1944, the Kremlin finds itself committed by its own inclination to the concrete task of becoming the dominant power of eastern and central Europe. At the same time, it also finds itself committed by past promises and by world opinion to a vague program which western statesmen—always so fond of quaint terms agreeable to their electorates—call collaboration.

The first of these programs implies taking. The second implies giving. No one can stop Russia from doing the taking, if she is determined to go through with it. No one can force Russia to do the giving, if she is determined not to go through with it. In these circumstances, others may worry. The Kremlin chimes, never silent since those turbulent days when Lenin had them repaired and set in motion, now peal out the hours of night with a ring of self-assurance and of confidence in the future. And the sleep of those who lie within the Kremlin walls is sound and undisturbed.

The men I have mentioned⁴⁰ are all men prominently connected with Russia's formal diplomatic relations with the western world. They are men who have contact with foreigners in their work and presumably access to the foreign press and foreign literature. Possibly this has indeed widened their horizons to some extent. But what about those other leading figures in the regime whose voice in the inner councils of state is obviously greater than the voice of any of these four, except possibly Molotov? What about such men as Beriya, Zhdanov, Shcherbakov, Andreyev, Kaganovich, etc? What advice do these men give to Stalin about foreign policy?

These prominent Soviet leaders know little of the outside world. They have no personal knowledge of foreign statesmen. To them, the vast pattern of international life, political and economic, can provide no associations, can hold no significance, except in what they conceive to be its bearing on the problems of Russian security and Russian internal life. It is possible that the conceptions of these men might occasionally achieve a rough approximation to reality, and their judg-

⁴⁰In the omitted portion of document the author had commented upon the powerful position of Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, and these men in particular who were prominently engaged in diplomatic relations with Western Powers and who presumably gave advice to Stalin on foreign policy: Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; Andrey Yanuaryevich Vyshinsky, First Assistant People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, formerly Chief Prosecutor of the Soviet Union; Solomon Abramovich Lozovsky, Assistant People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, formerly Secretary General of the Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern); and Dmitry Zakharovich Manuilsky, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, formerly a leading member of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the III (Communist) International (Comintern).

ments a similar approximation to fairness; but it is not likely. Independence of judgment has never been a strong quality of leading Communist figures. There is evidence that they are as often as not the victims of their own slogans, the slaves of their own propaganda. To keep a level head in the welter of propaganda and autosuggestion with which Russia has faced the world for the past twenty years would tax the best efforts of a cosmopolitan scholar and philosopher. These men are anything but that. God knows what strange images and impressions are created in their minds by what they hear of life beyond Russia's borders. God knows what conclusions they draw from all this, and what recommendations they make on the basis of those conclusions.

There is serious evidence for the hypothesis that there are influences in the Kremlin which place the preservation of a rigid police regime in Russia far ahead of the happy development of Russia's foreign relations, and which are therefore strongly opposed to any association of Russia with foreign powers except on Russia's own terms. These terms would include the rigid preservation of the conspiratorial nature of the Communist Party, of the secrecy of the working of the Soviet state, of the isolation of the population from external influences, of feelings of mistrust of the outside world and dependence on the Soviet regime among the population, of the extreme restriction of all activities of foreigners in the Soviet Union, and the use of every means to conceal Soviet reality from world opinion.

There is reason to believe that these influences have a certain measure of control over the information and advice that reach Stalin. Certainly there has been no appreciable relaxation, as compared with seven years ago, in the restrictions on association between foreigners and Russians; and representatives of Russia's allies continue to be treated today with no less suspicion than was shown to German representatives in the days of the most violent anti-fascist press polemics, prior to the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact. Fortunately, however, there is as yet no reason to conclude that this issue is finally decided and that the isolationists have entirely won the day. The overwhelming sentiment of the country is against them, so much so that this may become a serious internal issue in the aftermath of the war. So is the pressure of events in international life. They are undoubtedly balanced off by many men who have a healthier, a saner, and a more worthy conception of Russia's mission in the world. But that this xenophobic group exists and that it speaks with a powerful voice in the secret councils of the Kremlin is evident. And that it is in no way accessible to the pleas or arguments of responsible people in the outside world is no less clear.

As long as this situation endures, the great nations of the west will unavoidably be in a precarious position in their relations with Russia. They will never be able to be sure when, unbeknownst to them, people of whom they have no knowledge, acting on motives utterly obscure, will go to Stalin with misleading information and with arguments to be used to their disadvantage—information which they cannot correct and arguments which they have no opportunity to rebut. As long as this possibility exists, as long as it is not corrected by a freer atmosphere for the forming of acquaintances and the exchange of views, it is questionable whether even the friendliest of relations could be considered sound and dependable.

Those men of good will, among the foreign representatives in Moscow, for whom the relations of Russia with the world at large have become one of the great experiences and hopes of contemporary life, may go on with their patient work of unraveling the never-ending tangle of misunderstandings and difficulties which lie across the path of Russia's foreign relations. They will continue to be borne up in this trial of patience by their unanimous faith in the greatness of the Russian people and by their knowledge of the need of the world for Russia's talents. But at heart they all know that until the Chinese wall of the spirit has been broken down, as the actual Chinese wall of Moscow's business district was recently broken—until new avenues of contact and of vision are opened up between the Kremlin and the world around it—they can have no guarantee that their efforts will meet with success and that the vast creative abilities of Russia will not lead to the tragedy, rather than to the rescue, of western civilization.

Russia remains today, more than ever, an enigma for the western world. Simple American minds imagine that this is because "we don't know the truth about it." They are wrong. It is not our lack of knowledge which causes us to be puzzled by Russia. It is that we are incapable of understanding the truth about Russia when we see it.

We are incapable, in the first place, of understanding the role of contradiction in Russian life. The Anglo-Saxon instinct is to attempt to smooth away contradictions, to reconcile opposing elements, to achieve something in the nature of an acceptable middle-ground as a basis for life. The Russian tends to deal only in extremes, and he is not particularly concerned to reconcile them. To him, contradiction is a familiar thing. It is the essence of Russia. West and east, Pacific and Atlantic, arctic and tropics, extreme cold and extreme heat, prolonged sloth and sudden feats of energy, exaggerated cruelty and exaggerated kindness, ostentatious wealth and dismal squalor, violent

xenophobia and uncontrollable yearning for contact with the foreign world, vast power and the most abject slavery, simultaneous love and hate for the same objects: these are only some of the contradictions which dominate the life of the Russian people. The Russian does not reject these contradictions. He has learned to live with them, and in them. To him, they are the spice of life. He likes to dangle them before him, to play with them philosophically. He feels competent to handle them, to profit from them. Perhaps he even expects, at some time in the dim future, to lead them out into a synthesis more tremendous than anything the world has yet seen. But for the moment, he is content to move in them with that same sense of adventure and experience which supports a young person in the first contradictions of love.

The American mind will not apprehend Russia until it is prepared philosophically to accept the validity of contradiction. It must accept the possibility that just because a proposition is true, the opposite of that proposition is not false. It must agree never to entertain a proposition about the Russian world without seeking, and placing in apposition to it, its inevitable and indispensable opposite. Then it must agree to regard both as legitimate, valid conceptions. It must learn to understand that Russian life at any given moment is not the common expression of harmonious, integrated elements, but a precarious and ever shifting equilibrium between numbers of conflicting forces.

But there is a second, and even more daring, *tour de force* which the American mind must make if it is to try to find Russian life comprehensible. It will have to understand that for Russia, at any rate, there are no objective criteria of right and wrong. There are not even any objective criteria of reality and unreality.

What do we mean by this? We mean that right and wrong, reality and unreality, are determined in Russia not by any God, not by any innate nature of things, but simply by men themselves. Here men determine what is true and what is false.

The reader should not smile. This is a serious fact. It is the gateway to the comprehension of much that is mysterious in Russia. Bolshevism has proved some strange and disturbing things about human nature. It has proved that what is important for people is not what is there but what they conceive to be there. It has shown that with unlimited control over people's minds—and that implies not only the ability to feed them your own propaganda but also to see that no other fellow feeds them any of his—it is possible to make them feel and believe practically anything. And it makes no difference whether that "anything" is true, in our conception of the word. For the people who believe it, it becomes true. It attains validity, and all the powers

of truth. Men can enthuse over it, fight for it, die for it—if they are led to believe that it is something worthy. They can abhor it, oppose it, combat it with unspeakable cruelty—if they are led to believe that it is something reprehensible. Moreover, it becomes true (and this is one of the most vital apprehensions) not only for those to whom it is addressed, but for those who invent it as well. The power of auto-suggestion plays a tremendous part in Soviet life.

Let not the brash American think that he personally stands above these disturbing phenomena of the Russian world. Unless he is a man of great mental obtuseness or of great mental strength, he too, upon the first contact with Russian life, will begin to react strongly to these man-made currents, the reality of which he would have contemptuously rejected from a distance. He will soon take them as real forces, as real threats or as real promises. In that, he will be right. But he will not know what he is doing. He will remain the tool, rather than the master, of the material he is seeking to understand.

Soberly viewed, there is little possibility that enough Americans will ever accomplish these philosophical evolutions to permit of any general understanding of Russia on the part of our Government or our people. It would imply a measure of intellectual humility and a readiness to reserve judgment about ourselves and our institutions, of which few of us would be capable. For the foreseeable future the American, individually and collectively, will continue to wander about in the maze of contradiction and the confusion which is Russia, with feelings not dissimilar to those of Alice in Wonderland, and with scarcely greater effectiveness. He will be alternately repelled or attracted by one astonishing phenomenon after another, until he finally succumbs to one or the other of the forces involved or until, dimly apprehending the depth of his confusion, he flees the field in horror.

Distance, necessity, self-interest, and common-sense may enable us, thank God, to continue that precarious and troubled but peaceful co-existence which we have managed to lead with the Russians up to this time. But if so, it will not be due to any understanding on our part of the elements involved. Forces beyond our vision will be guiding our footsteps and shaping our relations with Russia. There will be much talk about the necessity for "understanding Russia"; but there will be no place for the American who is really willing to undertake this disturbing task. The apprehension of what is valid in the Russian world is unsettling and displeasing to the American mind. He who would undertake this apprehension will not find his satisfaction in the achievement of anything practical for his people, still less in any official or public appreciation for his efforts. The best he can look forward to is the lonely pleasure of one who stands at long

last on a chilly and inhospitable mountain top where few have been before, where few can follow, and where few will consent to believe that he has been.

GEORGE F. KENNAN

120.39/9-144

The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman) to the Secretary of State

No. 884

Moscow, September 1, 1944.

[Received September 19.]

SIR: I have the honor to refer to my telegrams Nos. 1418 and 2766 of April 24, 2 p. m. and July 26, 7 p. m., respectively,⁴¹ and to other communications from this Mission concerning marriages of members of United States Government personnel to Soviet citizens.

There are at present six cases of American-Soviet marriages of this sort, in which the wives, although they wish to leave the Soviet Union and have applied for permission to do so, have not been permitted to leave. In three of these cases, the husbands have already left the country. These were all men connected with the Military Mission, which required them to leave Russia after their marriages to local citizens. In the three other cases, the husbands are members of the staff of the State Department establishment and in consequence of their marriage to aliens their resignations from the Foreign Service are to be accepted; but the Embassy has not pressed their departure from Moscow because it is reluctant to force their separation from their wives.

These cases present a most troublesome problem for the Chief of Mission at this post. It is not the practice of the Soviet Government to give direct refusals to requests for exit permits on the part of these wives. Instead of this, they indicate their unwillingness to permit the women to leave by simply failing to answer communications on this subject. This leaves the cases formally open, and permits the persons involved to hope against hope that somehow and some day a favorable reply may be received. This hope has been further stimulated by the fact that on past occasions various chiefs of mission, American and otherwise, have brought political pressure to bear in high circles to induce the Soviet Government to take favorable action in individual instances. These efforts have been successful, and despite the obvious fact that the effectiveness of this approach would not last long if used in every instance, each of the married couples is firmly convinced that the only reason that the desired exit permit

⁴¹ Neither printed.

is not forthcoming is that the Ambassador, presumably out of hardness of heart, is unwilling to go to Stalin and make the necessary request. This shifts the moral stigma of a harsh practice from the Soviet Government to the Ambassador.

In addition to this, the human appeal of these cases is often very great. In one case, the woman is American by birth and is recognized by our authorities as an American citizen. She acquired Soviet citizenship involuntarily while she was a minor, through the naturalization of her mother. Her husband and her father are both in the United States. She herself is expecting a child, and has no adequate housing in Moscow for the winter. In several, if not all, of the cases where the husbands have left there is good reason to believe that if the Embassy were to cease to exhibit interest in the case the women would be immediately picked up by the secret police and deported or imprisoned, or both, as punishment for their act in marrying the servant of a foreign government, which is regarded as little less than traitorous. This means that the Embassy cannot simply disclaim interest in the cases without subjecting the wives to personal danger and the husbands to much mental anguish. The Embassy is therefore put in the awkward position of having to keep both husbands and wives under its wing indefinitely or of taking moral responsibility for separations and personal catastrophes.

In order that the Embassy might be protected as far as possible from this dilemma, identic letters setting forth the Embassy's position have been addressed to the last two members of the staff to state their intentions of marrying Soviet women.⁴² The text of these letters is submitted in Enclosure No. 1.⁴³

But to take this step at a time when the persons concerned are already emotionally involved and when the women are already compromised in the eyes of the Soviet authorities by their association with Americans amounts to locking the stable door after the horse is stolen, and it will not essentially alter the present situation. It would be much preferable if all men coming to this post in the service of the Government, whether civil or military, were to sign statements either before departure or immediately upon arrival here, making it clear that they are aware of the situation prevailing in Russia in this respect and assuming the responsibility for the probable consequences in the event that they marry Soviet citizens. I enclose a copy of a suggested wording of such a statement.⁴³

⁴² These were Foreign Service clerks at the Embassy, James A. Collins and William E. Wallace.

⁴³ Not printed.