

United States. Dept. of State. Policy Planning Staff.

INTRODUCTION
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THE STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY PLANNING STAFF PAPERS 1948

VOLUME II

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GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC.
NEW YORK & LONDON 1983

UNITED STATES OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO RUSSIA

August 18, 1948

Mr. Lovett:

There is attached a paper prepared by the Policy Planning Staff on United States Objectives with respect to Russia. This study has been prepared in connection with NSC-20, "Appraisal of the Degree and Character of Military Preparedness Required by the World Situation".

I recommend that you forward a copy of this paper to the Executive Secretary of the National Security Council under cover of the attached letter.

GEORGE F. KENNAN

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

I. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

In general, it should be our objective in time of peace as well as in time of war,

(a) to reduce the power and influence of Moscow to limits where they will no longer constitute a threat to the peace and stability of international society; and

(b) to bring about a basic change in the theory and practice of international relations observed by the government in power in Russia.

II. PEACETIME AIMS

Accordingly, it should be our aim in time of peace:

(a) To encourage and promote by means short of war the gradual retraction of undue

are further questions to be answered for the event that Soviet authority should disintegrate so rapidly and so radically as to leave the country in chaos, making it incumbent upon us as the victors to make political choices and to take decisions which would be apt to shape the political future of the country. For this eventuality there are three main questions which must be faced.

D. Partition vs. National Unity

First of all, would it be our desire, in such a case, that the present territories of the Soviet Union remain united under a single regime or that they be partitioned? And if they are to remain united, at least to a large extent, then what degree of federalism should be observed in a future Russian government? What about the major minority groups, in particular the Ukraine?

We have already taken note of the problem of the Baltic states. The Baltic states should not be compelled to remain under any communist authority in the aftermath of another war. Should the territory adjacent to the Baltic states be controlled by a Russian authority other than a communist authority, we should be guided by the wishes of the Baltic peoples and by the degree of moderation which that Russian authority is inclined to exhibit with respect to them.

In the case of the Ukraine, we have a different problem. The Ukrainians are the most advanced of the peoples who have been under Russian rule in modern times. They have generally resented Russian domination; and their nationalistic organizations have been active and vocal abroad. It would be easy to jump to the conclusion that they should be freed, at last, from Russian rule and permitted to set themselves up as an independent state.

We would do well to beware of this conclusion. Its very simplicity condemns it in terms of eastern European realities.

It is true that the Ukrainians have been unhappy under Russian rule and that something should be done to protect their position in future. But there are certain basic facts which must not be lost sight of. While the

Ukrainians have been an important and specific element in the Russian empire, they have shown no signs of being a "nation" capable of bearing successfully the responsibilities of independence in the face of great Russian opposition. The Ukraine is not a clearly defined ethnical or geographic concept. In general, the Ukrainian population made up of originally in large measure out of refugees from Russian or Polish despotism shades off imperceptibly into the Russian or Polish nationalities. There is no clear dividing line between Russia and the Ukraine, and it would be impossible to establish one. The cities in Ukrainian territory have been predominantly Russian and Jewish. The real basis of "Ukrainianism" is the feeling of "difference" produced by a specific peasant dialect and by minor differences of custom and folklore throughout the country districts. The political agitation on the surface is largely the work of a few romantic intellectuals, who have little concept of the responsibilities of government.

The economy of the Ukraine is inextricably intertwined with that of Russia as a whole. There has never been any economic separation since the territory was conquered from the nomadic Tatars and developed for purposes of a sedentary population. To attempt to carve it out of the Russian economy and to set it up as something separate would be as artificial and as destructive as an attempt to separate the Corn Belt, including the Great Lakes industrial area, from the economy of the United States.

Furthermore, the people who speak the Ukrainian dialect have been split, like those who speak the White Russian dialect, by a division which in eastern Europe has always been the real mark of nationality: namely, religion. If any real border can be drawn in the Ukraine, it should logically be the border between the areas which traditionally give religious allegiance to the Eastern Church and those which give it to the Church of Rome.

Finally, we cannot be indifferent to the feelings of the Great Russians themselves. They were the strongest national element in the Russian Empire, as they now are in the Soviet Union. They will continue to be the strongest national element in that general area, under any status. Any long-term U.S. policy must be based on their acceptance and their cooperation. The Ukrainian

territory is as much a part of their national heritage as the Middle West is of ours, and they are conscious of that fact. A solution which attempts to separate the Ukraine entirely from the rest of Russia is bound to incur their resentment and opposition, and can be maintained, in the last analysis, only by force. There is a reasonable chance that the Great Russians could be induced to tolerate the renewed independence of the Baltic states. They tolerated the freedom of those territories from Russian rule for long periods in the past and they recognize, subconsciously if not otherwise, that the respective peoples are capable of independence. With respect to the Ukrainians, things are different. They are too close to the Russians to be able to set themselves up successfully as something wholly different. For better or for worse, they will have to work out their destiny in some sort of special relationship to the Great Russian people.

It seems clear that this relationship can be at best a federal one, under which the Ukraine would enjoy a considerable measure of political and cultural autonomy but would not be economically or militarily independent. Such a relationship would be entirely just to the requirements of the Great Russians themselves. It would seem, therefore, to be along these lines that U.S. objectives with respect to the Ukraine should be framed.

It should be noted that this question has far more than just a distant future significance. Ukrainian and Great Russian elements among the Russian emigre-opposition groups are already competing vigorously for U.S. support. The manner in which we receive their competing claims may have an important influence on the development and success of the movement for political freedom among the Russians. It is essential, therefore, that we make our decision now and adhere to it consistently. And that decision should be neither a pro-Russian one nor a pro-Ukrainian one, but one which recognizes the historical geographic and economic realities involved and seeks for the Ukrainians a decent and acceptable place in the family of the traditional Russian Empire, of which they form an inextricable part.

It should be added that while, as stated above, we would not deliberately encourage Ukrainian separatism nevertheless if an independent regime were to come into being on the territory of the Ukraine through no doing

of ours, we should not oppose it outright, To do so would be to undertake an undesirable responsibility for internal Russian developments. Such a regime would be bound to be challenged eventually from the Russian side. If it were to maintain itself successfully, that would be proof that the above analysis was wrong and that the Ukraine does have the capacity for, and the moral right to, independent status. Our policy in the first instance should be to maintain an outward neutrality, as long as our own interests--military or otherwise--were not immediately affected. And only if it became clear that an undesirable deadlock was developing, we would encourage a composing of the differences along the lines of a reasonable federalism. The same would apply to any other efforts at the achievement of an independent status on the part of other Russian minorities. It is not likely that any of the other minorities could successfully maintain real independence for any length of time. However, should they attempt it (and it is quite possible that the Caucasian minorities would do this), our attitude should be the same as in the case of the Ukraine. We should be careful not to place ourselves in a position of open opposition to such attempts which would cause us to lose permanently the sympathy of the minority in question. On the other hand, we should not commit ourselves to their support to a line of action which in the long run could probably be maintained only with our military assistance.

K. The Choice of a New Ruling Group

In the event of a disintegration of Soviet power, we are certain to be faced with demands for support on the part of the various competing political elements among the present Russian opposition groups. It will be almost impossible for us to avoid doing things which would have the effect of favoring one or another of these groups over its rivals. But a great deal will depend on ourselves, and on our concept of what we are trying to accomplish.

We have already seen that among the existing and potential opposition groups there is none which we will wish to sponsor entirely and for whose actions, if it were to obtain power in Russia, we would wish to take responsibility.