

Diplomat lashes out at U.S. Mid-east policy

THESE are a few senior American diplomats and statesmen who command respect and attention whenever they speak up on foreign policy issues.

George F. Kennan is one of the most important.

After entering the foreign service fifty years ago, Kennan was the first American diplomat sent to the Soviet Union in 1932. He became ambassador within a few years and later served as ambassador to Yugoslavia. After World War II, when he headed the State Department's policy planning staff, he authored a famous article.

Blunt

More than any other, this article heralded the onset of America's "containment" policy of the Soviet Union.

This newest book's title, *The Cloud of Danger*, is a reference to the possibility of an American-Soviet confrontation unless the leadership of both nations can find the way to break out of the current stratagem of military rivalry. Through Kennan expresses caution about dealing with the Soviet Union, he insists that "apprehensions of a Russian quest for 'world domination' have little substance behind them."

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By Mark A. Bruzonsky

The subtitle of this new book is *Current Realities of American Foreign Policy*. The book is actually a survey, written in popular style, of the entire spectrum of American foreign policy.

Not surprisingly, Kennan breaks with conventional wisdom, or at least is considerably more blunt than the public has come to expect from diplomats. For instance, in discussing the Third World, Kennan calls these countries "... a horde of wholly untried and inexperienced small entities in whose responsible conduct we had not the faintest reason for confidence."

And in a rather unveiled reference to President Carter's human rights policies, Kennan states his own belief that "it is difficult to see any promise in an American policy which sets out to correct and improve the political habits of large parts of the world."

When Kennan focuses on the Mid-east (what he insists on referring to, "as an old-fashioned person," as the Near East), he has a number of specific things to say. He begins by asserting that the

U.S. has two serious long-term interests in the Near East — Israel's survival and preventing the region from being dominated by the Soviet Union. As for Israel, this is "a commitment not to the Israelis but to ourselves," he writes.

"It is," he continues, "a commitment to do all in our power, short of the actual dispatch and employment of combat forces, to assure that Israel continues to exist." As for anxiety about the Soviet Union's possible domination of the area, this is "not a very likely contingency," Kennan concludes.

Imperative

"The people who see Russian forces streaming down into that region, occupying it in its entirety, and bringing it all under direct Soviet rule, have a poor understanding both of Russian aims and capabilities and of the normal embarrassments and limitations of great-power imperialism."

Kennan has a number of central goals for the U.S. in the Near East. He sees as imperative "termination of dependence of Mid-

eastern oil." The goal, Kennan states, should be "reduction of our imports from the countries in question to a point where the degree of our dependence on them would not be serious and where we would thus achieve a bargaining power at least not inferior to their own."

"Until we do that, we will have no effective voice with them. No American president should ever approach other rulers from a position as humiliating as this."

Kennan adds: "These views reflect no hostility towards the countries in question, nor even any resentment over their action in raising the prices for oil as they have. We have invited it — with our inflation, our greed for oil, our willingness to accept a growing dependence in order to obtain it. They have done what appeared to them to be in their interests. It was up to us, not them, to look after ours."

A second major goal, according to Kennan, should be "to bring about an early clarification of the limits of our responsibility for Israeli policy. We have allowed

the impression that we have it in our power to make the Israelis do almost anything we want." Kennan adds that "we have compounded the error — of letting the Arabs hold us responsible for Israeli policy — by letting the Israelis look to us as their advocate and champions vis-a-vis the Arabs. Considering our helplessness in the face of the oil-producing states, this is even sillier."

Today, Kennan asserts, "each of the two parties believe it can use us for its own ends. Each has the impression that it is primarily through us that its desiderata can be achieved." The result is that "we are always the first to be blamed." "Seldom," writes Kennan, "can a great power have gotten itself into a more unsound and unnecessary position."

Kennan's suggestion for extracting the U.S. from this situation is as follows: "Our own role should be confined to assuring that the Israelis are strong enough militarily so that the idea of crushing them by force of arms does not offer promising prospects to anybody, and so that they have an adequate measure of bargaining power in any negotiations."

"But we should not try to tell them, or the Arabs, what the terms of a settlement should be."