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THE WHITE HOUSE  
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Dick Cheney

interesting



# American Views

Essential information to help decision makers understand what the media, government leaders and the public are saying and thinking.

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## Point of View

### *Prescription for America: a new policy of containment*

*The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce has served as ambassador to Italy and as a member of Congress after a notable career as a magazine editor, newspaper columnist and playwright. An authority on foreign affairs, she has written for AMERICAN VIEWS a proposal advocating a change in America's foreign policy.*

By The Hon. Clare Boothe Luce

Let us imagine that Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the great Russian novelist, Nobel Prize winner and exiled patriot, had arrived in America in 1961. This was the 12th year of the U.S. policy of containment—America's global response to the global threat of Soviet imperialism and World Revolutionary Communism. In his inaugural address, President John F. Kennedy had told his fellow citizens and the world:

*"We shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty."*

In that year, no one would have been surprised if (as surely would have happened) the young President had invited Solzhenitsyn, Russia's Patrick Henry, to the White House. Everyone, at home and abroad, would have understood the moral and political significance of the gesture. It would have emphasized America's indestructible devotion to the great American proposition that all men are equally entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It would also have symbolized the dedication of the U.S. to its policy of containment.

And that's the way it wasn't.

Solzhenitsyn landed in the United States in 1975. Containment had perished in the long, badly fought war in Vietnam. The U.S., the strongest military power in the world, had accepted defeat at the hands of a small Soviet military proxy, and had checked out of the Cold War struggle. It was the third year of detente, the American effort to "relax tensions" with its rival super-power, Soviet Russia.

The objective of detente was to protect U.S. vital interests, and to maintain the post-Vietnam status quo of the West, *without incurring any risk of war or "confrontation" with the Soviet Union or any of its allies.*

The architect of the policy, Dr. Kissinger, believed this could be achieved by involving the USSR in "a web of mutual interests": wheat deals, massive trade credits, technological aid, recognition of the Soviet's previous conquests, and nuclear parity for Russia; for America, Soviet good behavior. Cut Brezhnev in on the capitalist pie, and he would give up winning any more military or political victories at the expense of the West.

Solzhenitsyn, in America, was not sanguine about the prospects for detente. He said, in a speech soon after his arrival, that the West is still reluctant to believe that "the purpose of the Soviet Union and its far-flung allies is to destroy your society. . . . You want to believe otherwise, so you cut down your armies, you cut down your research, but . . . the Soviet Union is not cutting down. . . . The Cold War . . . has never stopped for one second in the Soviet Union." The USSR's increasing superiority in armaments, he said, was being greatly aided and abetted by detente's

economic and technological aid, and this aid was also strengthening the Soviet slave system. "When they bury us (Russian dissenters) alive," he pleaded, "please do not send them the shovels and the most up-to-date earth-moving equipment."

Solzhenitsyn's impassioned warnings rang bells all over America, and even a few in official Washington. A few members of the Administration (among whom reportedly was Secretary of Defense Schlesinger) urged President Ford to receive the exiled Nobel laureate at the White House, if only for a few minutes. On the advice of Dr. Kissinger, the President retused.

The reason? Mr. Brezhnev would be offended. He might even refuse to go on with detente. And according to Kissinger, the only alternative to detente was war with Soviet Russia.

Everyone at home and abroad understood the significance of the incident. The U.S., in its search for peace with the USSR, had abandoned not only the military struggle against Communism, but the moral and political struggle as well. The U.S. was paralyzed by the fear that any "confrontation" with Moscow—even a moral confrontation—would lead to a "nuclear holocaust."

How sound is a foreign policy whose *paramount objective* is to make peace with its greatest enemy?

If peace is a nation's supreme objective, it can always be had by sacrificing the nation's vital interests, or by appeasing its enemy. And if the enemy proves to be unappeasable, and war comes anyway, peace can still be had by submission or surrender.

A nation that desires to survive will not make peace the paramount objective of its foreign policy.

The paramount objective of a *sound* foreign policy is the protection of the nation's *vital interests* by peaceful and diplomatic means, wherever possible—by the risk of war, or war itself, when necessary.

The U.S. has many vital interests. It has a vital interest in its trade with many other nations, especially its trade in materials essential to its industrial process—oil, copper, nickel, bauxite, etc. It has a vital interest in defending its own shores. But because no nation is strong enough to stand alone, the U.S. also has a vital interest in maintaining reliable allies and friendly neighbors.

Common sense should tell us that it has a vital interest in *not* supporting unfriendly, aggressive, totalitarian systems.

In the jungle world of the sovereign nations, no nation has ever found a way to protect its vital interests without maintaining military forces adequate to its commitments. The U.S. also has a vital interest in maintaining, together with its allies, a preponderance of power over its enemies.

The alternative to "detente" is *not* nuclear war. The alternative is a new policy of containment, conducted by a prudent and resolute President and Secretary of State.

The new containment would concentrate on restoring the great Western alliance to political, economic and military health, and cooperating closely with it in all military decisions affecting their common security. The new containment would *compete* with totalitarian systems, both of the left and the right. It would not subsidize them. It would leave them to solve their own economic and technological problems.

The new containment would be open and ready to meet the USSR halfway wherever and whenever it evidenced a real desire for international cooperation, for a quid-pro-quo, or *mutual*, "relaxation of tension," including *mutual* disarmament. But it would remain psychologically and militarily prepared to protect our vital interests, even at the risk of nuclear war.

*We do not live alone in the world with the nuclear risk. The Soviets also live with it.* There is no reason to suppose that they are any more eager to commit nuclear suicide than we are. The USSR took "the nuclear risk" once—in 1961, when it planted nuclear missiles in Cuba. When America stood firm, it swiftly departed with its missiles.

The world is a dangerous place. It always has been. We cannot wish away the dangers, or hope to overcome them, if we let our fear of them paralyze us.

The new-containment policy makers would face the dangers with patience and courage, confident that America has the power, the resources, the brains, the skills, and the faith in itself to overcome them.