

# Pathfinder

January 25, 1950

## The Eastern Front Folds

**State Department alters containment policy against Russia in Asia as Formosa fight looms**

The man who guides America's foreign policy in the Far East was talking fast all over Washington last week, trying to explain it.

Dean G. Acheson, mustache waxed, voice smooth and manners impeccable, seemed for several days to be on a continuous trolley which ran from the State Department to the Senate Foreign Relations committee, to the House Foreign Affairs committee, to the National Press Club, to the Senate Foreign Relations committee and back to the State Department.

Everywhere his tall figure appeared, the Secretary of State left a trail of conflicting reports and differing conclusions. But this week, as the dust began to settle over the most dramatic American decision since the war ended, the new U.S. policy was beginning to emerge in reasonably clear outline:

**The Line.** No official military aid for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist government, either on the island of Formosa or anywhere else. No hasty recognition of the Communist Chinese government of Mao Tse-tung. No attempt to stop further Russian advances in Asia except through "friendly encouragement" to India, French Indo-China, Siam, Burma and the new United States of Indonesia. And a military defense-line east of Formosa, stretching from Japan and Korea in the north down through Okinawa and the Philippines to the south.

At a National Press Club luncheon, where he made his only full-scale public statement of policy, Acheson in effect withdrew the United States from an active role in the military defense of Asia. In a startling reversal of Administration policy ever since 1945, he scoffed at the idea that the United States' main purpose is to stop communism.

"Nothing," said Dean Acheson blandly "seems to me to put the cart before the horse more completely than that."

The United States, he said, doesn't like communism, but its main purpose is to encourage the governments in communism's path so that they can resist it, rather than to offer them any direct preventive aid. All it can do now in China is encourage "the righteous anger and

## The Eastern Front

the wrath and the hatred of the Chinese people" against the Soviet Union's "detachment" of the far north provinces of Outer Mongolia (which Russia first began threatening as far back as 1918), Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and Sinkiang.



Wide World

**Dean Acheson.** *The Secretary explained a new Far Eastern policy. (SEE: Folds)*

**Mirage.** Calmly ignoring the direct and complete American interventions symbolized in Greece, the Marshall Plan and the Military Aid Program, Acheson explained that U.S. assistance could be effective only "when it is the missing component in a situation which might otherwise be solved. The United States cannot furnish all these components to solve the question."

The U.S. cannot follow the European pattern in Asia, Acheson maintained, because of the "new day" which has dawned there. Asia has a long history of resentment against white men's imperialism. Its newly-formed independent states are fiercely jealous of their independence.

"It is a day in which the Asian peoples are on their own and know it and

## The Eastern Front

intend to continue on their own. . . . We are their friends. Others are their friends. We and those others are willing to help but we can help only where we are wanted and only where the conditions of help are really sensible and possible."

In case of actual attack, he said, "the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the United Nations charter."

**Symbol.** The Administration obviously hoped that its rapid switch would head off a major foreign policy fight in Congress. Even before Acheson began his sales job, the President on Jan. 5 had formally abandoned Formosa. But neither his decision nor the Secretary's smooth arguments were enough to silence critics. Perhaps the critics—in that they had failed to offer a constructive alternative over the years—were themselves to blame in some degree. But Formosa had become a symbol of the whole crashing failure in China, and the critics could not be silenced by attempts to make them share the blame.

Most concerned were the Republican Senators who had forced the issue to a head at the behind-the-scenes instigation of Gen. Douglas MacArthur—California's William F. Knowland, New Jersey's H. Alexander Smith, Massachusetts's Leverett Saltonstall, Michigan's Homer Ferguson, Ohio's Robert A. Taft. Taft said Formosa could still be held if U.S. naval units stationed nearby simply imposed a blockade against a Communist crossing to the island. Even Michigan's Arthur H. Vandenberg, who climbed aboard the bipartisan foreign policy band wagon in January 1945, showed signs of wanting to clamber off.

Vandenberg said he regarded hearings on the views of the Defense Department—which Acheson overrode with the President's help—as "not only pertinent but indispensable." At week's end Chairman Tom Connally of the Senate Foreign Relations committee grumblingly bowed to GOP pressure, announced that Defense Secretary Louis A. Johnson and Gen. Omar N. Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, would be called to testify on Jan. 26.

**Wedge.** From Acheson's careful tributes to Asiatic independence and his emphasis on Soviet imperialism in the Chinese provinces, it appeared that he was hoping to drive a wedge between the Russians and the Chinese Communist government. Mao Tse-tung was in Moscow conferring with Joseph Stalin. The talks had already lasted over a month, which might well indicate major differences between the Red boss and his newest satellite.

The question of whether or not the United States would formally recognize Mao's regime was rapidly becoming academic. With brazen disregard of U.S.

## **The Eastern Front**

opinion, the Communists seized the American consulate at Peking. Washington retaliated by closing down all American consulates in Red China. In the United Nations Security Council, Soviet delegate Jacob A. Malik continued to press for the expulsion of Chinese Nationalist Dr. Tingfu F. Tsiang.

**The Record.** The new American policy was born of political expediency and the collapse of old policies which had failed to save China. The decisions of Yalta, in which the late President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill gave Russia a broad sphere of influence in North China, could not be wiped from history's record. Nor could the fact that the Administration had consistently ignored the advice of its own men, such as Lt. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, who had pleaded repeatedly that the matter be turned over to the U.N. before it was too late.

Mme. Chiang Kai-shek was not, perhaps, the most objective of observers, and yet in a moving farewell address to the American people before returning to Formosa, she said words which might yet come back to haunt the United States:

"Let no one be deceived. Ours is the cause of freedom. It is not, and the world should know it is not, our struggle alone. China's struggle now is the initial phase of a gigantic conflict between good and evil, between liberty and communism. . . .

"That which is morally wrong can never be politically right."

To fill the vacuum of foreign policy in the Far East, Acheson held out the possibility of a split between Mao and Moscow, the chance that other Asiatic nations could be held in the American orbit by offers of financial and technical aid under a "Point IV" program.

The nation to which the world had looked for sureness in leadership against the Communists was dealing now only in cautious hopes.