

Poland and throughout Europe. In Poland itself a campaign has been opened to discredit M. Mikolajczyk and to remove him from office, while every effort is also being made to hamper good Anglo-Polish relations. In Yugoslavia also our influence is being consistently weakened. Hungary and Austria, which voted for moderate parties in the recent elections, are now being subjected to strong political and economic pressure from the Soviet Union to teach them a lesson. In Italy, and above all in France, the Communist parties are being encouraged, and Communist propaganda is constantly directed against us. More recently developments in regard to Spain have given the Russians their opportunity to show their continued interest in that country, where they are prepared to encourage a new civil war regardless of British interests. Most serious of all, Anglo-Soviet differences are also coming to a head in Germany itself, where the Russians, not content with achieving a joint Communist-Social Democratic *bloc* in Berlin and with a rising campaign of criticism of the administration of our zone of Germany, are now encouraging the Communists to advocate a united "democratic" Germany in full control of the Ruhr. This in itself suggests that Soviet hostility to the so-called Western *bloc* is as strong as ever, and indeed M. Vyshinski has recently admitted as much to M. Spaak, to whom he accused us of building up such a *bloc* (to include Poland and Czechoslovakia) against the Soviet Union.

8. This is a sombre picture, and it is hardly surprising that we ask ourselves what lies behind these manifestations of Soviet opposition to a Britain which has for the past four and a half years constantly endeavoured, not only to support the Soviet war effort—often at the expense of our own—but also to meet Soviet territorial and other requirements even though in some cases, as Poland, we had grave doubts whether these requirements, taken as a whole, were legitimate or opportune. It is possible that our very forbearance and co-operative spirit have been misinterpreted as weakness here. Indeed, a diplomatic colleague recently told me that an intelligent Soviet acquaintance of his had informed him that Britain was now the sick man of Europe, much as Turkey had been throughout the 19th century, and that our fate during the coming years was likely to resemble that of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Certainly the present line of Soviet policy and propaganda, and the viciousness of Soviet attacks upon our interests throughout the world, lend some colour to this hypothesis. But I am not convinced that present Soviet policy towards us is in fact based upon a conviction of our weakness. On the contrary, the very vehemence of Soviet criticism and the almost hysterical manner in which we are being attacked at all points at once suggest a certain fear of our inherent strength, which may have been increased by the recent London meeting of the U.N.O., at which the Soviet delegates found the whole world, with few exceptions, ranged on our side under your own moral leadership. The rulers of Russia already realised when Labour was returned to power at the general election last July that there was now a progressive force in the world of equal and possibly greater attraction than their own Communist system. They also know, despite all attempts to divide us, that behind Britain stand in the last resort not only the Dominions but probably also the United States, for whose material strength there is the most pronounced respect here. My impression is therefore that the present Soviet push on all diplomatic fronts simultaneously is partly an attempt to profit from the present fluid state of post-war Europe and the world, and from immediate post-war difficulties, but partly also an almost desperate effort to seize advanced positions and to dig in before the inevitable reaction against high-handed Soviet actions sets in with a return to more normal and peaceful conditions. This applies in particular to Europe, Persia and Turkey. In India, in the rest of the Middle East and in the colonies, the Soviet Union no doubt feels greater confidence in the ultimate strength and attraction of its ideas, as I have suggested in my despatch No. 30, and it is therefore in those areas that we are likely to experience more intense and constant Soviet pressure.

9. My feeling that there may be a touch of desperation behind much of present-day Soviet policy is strengthened by their recent attitude towards America. The obvious goal of Soviet policy, shown very clearly in the reactions to Mr. Churchill's Fulton speech, must be to keep us and America apart as far as possible, and in this they were not unsuccessful in Moscow last December. But their very lack of moderation since then, the way in which they have pressed their demands simultaneously throughout the world, the impression they have created that there is no limit to Soviet aims and that a concession in one place merely leads to further demands elsewhere, now seem to have alarmed the Americans as much as ourselves. Above all, Soviet behaviour and unilateral

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