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Copy for Mrs Roosevelt
Mr RFK

1981 Diamond Street,
San Francisco, 14, Calif.,
March 17th, 1947.

Senator William F. Knowland,
Senate Office Building,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:-

I am not alone when I view with apprehension and disapproval Pres. Truman's declaration that we will send troops and war materiel into Greece, with the avowed purpose of bringing so-called order out of chaos.

His decision was doubtless made with the conviction that such an action would be in the best interests of all peoples concerned. But that is a purely American viewpoint. What about the viewpoint of people over there? Can you put yourself in the position of any European citizen, fairly and without prejudice?

I am, for I was born in Holland in 1899; came to this country at the age of 20. During the first World War I was over there, selling the Rhine, saw the untold suffering people went through during those four years - which was nothing compared to the suffering endured in the last war. But no matter what hardship any country goes through, the people of that country hold it as their inalienable right to manage their own affairs, attend to their voting and election of members of Parliament without outside interference.

To quote from Pres. Truman's speech: "It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures". Yet by moving into Greece with arms and troops, wouldn't we be constituting that very "outside pressure" we object to? Since when do two wrongs make a right?

As in the case of Greece, every country in Europe could be treated in a like manner, because it has been recently hinted that loans will be needed to rehabilitate France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, etc. For the last thirty years those countries have had a Communist Party in their Government. Would our loans be granted a starving population only on condition that the countries resolving some most first exist the communist element from their Government? If so, would that not create civil war, and would it be to our advantage to have civil strife break out, so that we could go in there with our troops and guns to subjugate those people who do not wish to be dictated to by ANYONE regarding which leaders they shall choose in their Government?

Instead of looking to the United States for leadership in a march toward economic freedom, peoples all over the world (including our neighbors to the south as well) will eye us with fear, wondering how soon the military might of the United States will move into their land to add some reactionary faction calling for help to subdue any opposite element.

Evolution toward easier living conditions for the working man started in the late nineties in Europe. For instance, compulsory education, the child labor law, socialised medicine, workmen's compensation

insurance, adequate unemployment benefits, an average 44-hour work week - all these had been enacted into law before the first World War. The people were slowly advancing toward higher standards of living when events in 1914 set them back 25 years in their progress. Still, they kept on struggling for improvement, and trying to hold on to advantages already gained - all this by free election, regardless of party.

What ARE the best ways to turn people against Communism? Not by force, I can assure you, because any red-blooded man in countries like France, Belgium and Holland would vote, regardless of conviction, AGAINST policies dictated by outside control. But rather by making people admire our form of government.

We have goodwill ambassadors in the thousands and thousands who have been sending packages of food and clothing to friends and relatives in the old countries. Myself, for instance, with the kind cooperation of friends, have sent something like two hundred parcels to different branches of my family in Holland, who have been very thankful for everything. I have received many letters expressing appreciation, not only for what I could do, but for the American people and all they have done for less fortunate countries. Admiration of American people and what they are able to do must necessarily embrace interest in a form of government which places its citizens (and I represent our average workman), in such a "fortunate" bracket - not only to have enough for ourselves but enough to help those who need aid.

Furthermore, at the San Francisco Labor Council last Friday, Pres. Shelley asked for whole-hearted support of delegates in the endorsing of a \$12,000,000 relief for the Greek people, with the understanding that a commission be sent to Greece to see that needy people will be helped, regardless of race, creed, color or party affiliation. This won the unanimous approval of all delegates. In my opinion, this is a much better method to build goodwill. Why can't our Government supplement this by sending the true necessities for rehabilitation - not arms and troops, which produce nothing but an alarmingly mounting national debt.

That is a most important factor, too, the economic angle. All the advantages we Americans now enjoy will vanish very soon if we don't put an end to the tremendous sums wastefully expended. Pres. Truman asks for 37½ billion for the next fiscal year (a peace year, mind you); the legislation of the State of California is trying to adopt a 3 billion dollar program; the City of San Francisco is talking about putting over another 56 million dollar bond issue. Doubtless some of this money is for constructive purposes, but when on top of that, Pres. Truman comes before Congress and asks for a down payment of 400 million for Greece and Turkey "as a starter", saying he will not hesitate to come before Congress again and ask for more whenever he deems it necessary, then we should give pause to consider where all this will lead us. It's only a few years ago that Pres. Roosevelt requested 4 billion for peace-time expenditure, and everyone was aghast; nowadays, 37½ billion is asked without the slightest hesitation whatsoever.

If we continue sinking money into a bottomless pit to keep our military might scattered all over the world, there will be only one or two ways to raise more money: either by levying intolerable taxes on

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our citizens and all future generations of citizens, or by exploitation of the very lands we are so expensively "protecting". To me it seems as if we are starting on something that will be a burden to the whole human race.

Why don't we learn a lesson from Britain's plight? She has spent a century or two policing and protecting peoples all over the world. Results? Those peoples are still in turmoil with their native antagonisms - and Britain is flat on her back, worn out and bankrupt.

Will we practice on Greece, and graduate to larger problems? Is Palestine to come next? When Britain pulls out of India in 1948, shall we attempt to solve by force of arms the age-old differences there, too? There are always so-called emergencies cropping up. Heretofore, America has more or less minded her own business, building up into one of the richest nations history has ever known. Are we to throw away our wealth, our energies, and countless lives, on problems (real, or maybe cleverly manipulated), which will bring us no thanks and certainly hatred and suspicion?

Why was United Nations created, if not to solve in a peaceful, constructive manner the differences that plague the world? That is the logical approach toward settlement - by thoughtful arbitration and planning and material help toward economic freedom - not by despatching troops and arms to any troubled area. If the United Nations organization, in its present set-up, is not empowered to handle such problems, then why should its scope not be broadened? We MUST either work within the framework of United Nations, or we will rapidly drift into what ruled the world before - power politics.

Above all, let us search deeply and discuss frankly and publicly every possible motive there might be behind the present trend. Who can say that WE are 100% right in our reasoning? Who are WE to say there is room for only one form of government in the whole wide universe? What might appear to Americans to be a holy crusade might well appear to others as only another form of imperialism.

My viewpoints are respectfully submitted. I firmly believe we have the best kind of government - for this country; other lands, however, have an entirely different set of conditions to meet and might very well require other methods of attaining their own goals. The same hat doesn't fit everybody. And this I do maintain, that it is only by an understanding, tolerant, generous attitude that we can inspire trust and a true admiration for our democratic way of life.

Very truly yours,

John J. van Hoff
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