



Appel column: America is dying

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As World War II in Europe had come to a close, an entirely different set of problems began to arise. Josef Stalin was looking to spread communism throughout portions of Europe that were now both economically and politically disrupted.

One of the most important flashpoints was Greece. A civil war had erupted between a communist group known as the National Liberation Front and a nationalist group called the National Republican Greek League. Even before the war had ended, the two groups were dueling for control of Greece. It was seen by most that Greece could not fall under Soviet influence. The geography of Russia being what it is, there is no reliable warm water port for their navy. Only the Black Sea fleet can move freely 12 months a year, but the Black Sea is closed in by the straits at the Dardenelles. As long as Turkey remained friendly to western countries, the Soviet Black Sea fleet would remain bottled up. But if Greece became a Soviet puppet state, harbors could be used that would immediately threaten Europe, the Suez Canal, and the Middle East.

Great Britain had been an open supporter of the Greek nationalist. But England's economy had been ravaged by six years of war. Unable to meet the financial demands of continuing their support in Greece, and with the foundation of their once world encompassing empire crumbling beneath them, they turned to the United States for help.

Breaking with 150 years of traditional American foreign policy to stay out of foreign entanglements, President Harry Truman sent his Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson to numerous Congressmen to lobby for United States assistance. Acheson is credited by some as coining the phrase "domino effect." If a country fell under the sphere of soviet influence, it would be easier to spread communism to neighboring countries. Congress approved \$400 million and needed aid began to flow both to the Greek nationalist and to Turkey. Truman was later to get Congress to approve another \$120 billion to rebuild Europe in what became known as the Marshall Plan.

Known today as the Truman Doctrine, his understanding was that if the threat of communism was to be met, it was our country that had to come to the aid of the world. Truman's prescient understanding of the world and the future undoubtedly saved Greece from a communist take-over and bolstered and ultimately turned Turkey into an American ally.

Over the decades since the end of World War II, the U.S. has steadily increased the amount of aid given to the world and greatly increased the number of countries that receive financial assistance. The Cato Institute reports that, since the days of the Truman Doctrine, well over a trillion dollars has been doled out in foreign aid. The Huffington Post states that the U.S. now sends \$50 billion a year overseas.

Foreign aid accounts for only about 1 percent of our national budget — one penny on the dollar. Most of it is surely well spent. Peace Corp initiatives and aid to Haiti after the earthquake are two excellent examples of foreign aid put to good use. The U.S. spends millions each year to combat and educate about HIV and AIDS. Medicines and vaccines are provided to developing nations in both humanity and morally correct aid from the richest country in the world.

But surely a reevaluation needs to take place. A number of Kansas school districts will close early because they have run out of money to operate a full school calendar. But our country can afford to give \$22 million to St. Kitts and Nevis, two islands that are part of the British Commonwealth. The Affordable Care Act is criticized on many fronts, not the least is how to pay for it. Our interest and condemnation of Palestine against Israel is well known, but the Palestinians still receive \$2 billion a year. That would put a nice dent in the cost of "Obama Care."

The website www.homelandsecuritynewswire says that 12 percent of all bridges in the U.S. are "structurally deficient" and need to be replaced. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates it would cost about \$17 billion to rebuild those bridges. Maybe we do not need to send \$1.5 billion to Syria.

A Congressional report shows that we have provided North Korea with over \$600 million in food assistance yet some 16 million of our own children go to bed hungry every night.

America is dying because she tried to save the world. But forgot about you and me.