

**Mobilizing Europe's Stateless:
America's Plan for a Cold War Army**

By James Jay Carafano

In the early years of the Cold War, the United States sought to mobilize indigenous European groups for the defense of Western Europe. A secret proposal to create a Volunteer Freedom Corps envisaged the formation of combat battalions from displaced European ethnic and nationalist forces that were to be stationed in Germany and Austria under U.S. command. This idea was first broached during the Truman administration, but it gained much greater impetus after the election in 1952 of Dwight Eisenhower, who had high hopes for the Corps. Eisenhower believed that efforts to mobilize and unite Europe's stateless population would contribute to the common European defense and foster West European integration. The reaction of the European governments, however, was distinctly negative. They feared that the proposed Corps would destabilize the intricate ethnic and interstate relationships that had been rebuilt in Europe after 1945. European suspicion of the Corps finally convinced Eisenhower to abandon the initiative.

The history of the Volunteer Freedom Corps sheds valuable light on key aspects of the Cold War. The proposal for a Corps emerged as the United States was still developing most of the security and foreign policy instruments on which it relied throughout the Cold War. From 1946 to 1955, when the idea for a Corps was under active consideration, the United States experimented with a range of initiatives to block the spread of Soviet influence in Western Europe. During this period, containment evolved as the centerpiece of U.S. strategy, and American leaders even dabbled with the notion of "rolling back" Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. The United States embraced security schemes,

including the creation of NATO, proposals for a European Defense Community (EDC), universal military training, military assistance, covert operations behind the Iron Curtain, and the development and deployment of thermonuclear bombs and tactical nuclear weapons. Although the Volunteer Freedom Corps never became a formal part of America's Cold War arsenal, its history reveals a great deal about this dynamic era in U.S. foreign and defense policy.

The Volunteer Freedom Corps was more than just a passing idea, briefly floated by a new administration. Rather, the Corps reflected three characteristics that would come to shape U.S. Cold War security programs.

First, the very fact that key U.S. officials were intent on forming the Corps underscores the emerging power of the President's executive office to shape national security strategy. Before the National Security Act was adopted in 1947, peacetime "out-of-the-box" proposals like the Volunteer Freedom Corps stood little chance of surviving the gauntlet of Congress, the State Department, and the military establishment in competing with more traditional defense and foreign policy programs. The National Security Act, which created the National Security Council (NSC), not only gave the President better coordination of security issues, it also provided a new source of ideas and schemes to fight the Cold War. The painstaking consideration given to the proposal for a Freedom Corps demonstrated the increasing power of the President's office to set the defense and foreign policy agenda with much less regard for the views and interests of the traditional bureaucracies.¹

1. For a discussion of the expanding role of the Presidential executive office in the postwar national security state see Alfred Dick Sander, *A Staff for the President* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Second, as a projected element in a European security system, the Volunteer Freedom Corps illustrated the U.S. predilection for state-focused solutions that largely ignored the role of civil society in building peace and stability. The United States showed scant interest in promoting the communication and understanding required to build trust and to mitigate cultural and ethnic tensions in diverse societies. Instead, U.S. security proposals emphasized the support of governments, corporate interests, and multinational organizations in a broad effort to marshal human resources on behalf of the state. This approach was shared, in far more brutal form, in the Soviet Union's occupation of Eastern Europe. As a result, the Cold War standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union merely suppressed rather than alleviated European ethnic tensions and conflicts.²

Third, U.S. advocacy of the Volunteer Freedom Corps and the West European governments' opposition to it highlight one of the persistent themes in the Cold War. It is clear enough why senior U.S. officials would have found the Corps appealing. The proposal held out hope of a stronger stance against Soviet expansion, while imposing a minimal drain on U.S. resources. It is equally clear why the European governments would have objected so strongly. European opposition was deeply rooted in issues of culture and ethnic identity. This same divide between U.S. and European concerns recurred numerous times over the next four decades and became a hallmark of transatlantic relations.

2. For a discussion of the role of civil society in state policy, international relations, and security issues see Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998); and Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals* (London: Penguin, 1994). The U.S. approach to the Cold War stands in sharp contrast to some recent proposals for promoting security and stability in Europe through civil society. See, for example, Richard Rose, *What is Europe? A Dynamic Perspective* (New York: Longman, 1996).

These three characteristics had a synergistic effect on one another. The new national security structure amplified the power of the President. At the same time, it reinforced the preconceptions underlying the state-centered emphasis of U.S. policy toward Europe. The history of the Volunteer Freedom Corps thus illustrates the policy-making dynamics--as well as the shortcomings--of U.S. efforts to forge a European defense system at the dawn of the Cold War.

Henry Cabot Lodge 's Unconventional Proposal

After World War II, refugees, expatriates, and escapees from behind the Iron Curtain became Europe's "wild card." Postwar Western Europe contained an enormous stateless population that, according to some estimates, numbered fourteen million. The Allies had an official term, "displaced persons," to designate those who became refugees as a result of Nazi aggression. Almost half of these people had either fled the Soviet Union or refused to return to lands under Soviet control. They were present in almost every West European country.

Because of the enormous number of people uprooted by World War II, the task of sorting them out was daunting. Almost a quarter of the people in Germany and Austria, for example, were refugees. In the eyes of many Europeans, these groups were little more than sources of disease and crime. They were seen as competitors for scarce housing and jobs, and as potential recruits for future demagogues who might trigger another European conflict. To enhance the stability of fragile postwar states it was essential to resolve the status of Europe's stateless populations as quickly as possible.

From 1945 to 1947, the Allies resettled or repatriated the bulk of those who were officially classified as displaced persons. As the Cold War intensified, however, processing became more

difficult. Many did not want to be returned to their country of origin out of fear that they would be killed, imprisoned, or otherwise persecuted by the Communist regimes. Accommodating this hard core of displaced persons--as well as other stateless Europeans who did not fit into "official" categories--became increasingly problematic. In 1947, for example, the United States still had custody of 47,396 displaced persons in Austria alone, of which 90 percent were deemed "irrepatriable" because of the political situation in Eastern Europe.³ The growing tension of the Cold War had made it almost impossible to resolve the final status of East Europeans stranded in the West.

Some U.S. officials perceived a simple solution to the problem of stateless Europeans. Schemes for mobilizing the refugee population to help defend Western Europe flourished in the early years of the Cold War. These initiatives were appealing because they promised to organize, discipline, and integrate Western Europe's displaced ethnic and nationalist groups while building increased trust and confidence through international cooperation. Such an approach, it was argued, would promote West European integration and undermine morale in the Eastern bloc. Supporters of the idea hoped that units of the displaced would serve as a bulwark against Communism and help overcome the long-standing tensions in Western Europe among ethnic minorities.

The U.S. military establishment had secret plans of its own to rely on European displaced persons in the event of a future war, but the main supporter of the effort to mobilize Europe's refugees

3. Lawrence Frenkel Papers, folder 1, Hoover Institute, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California (here after cited as HI). For a useful overview of the disposition of Europe's post-war stateless populations, see Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted. European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

was Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., a Republican Senator from Massachusetts.⁴ The Lodge Act, passed on 30 June 1950, authorized the enlistment of foreigners in the U.S. military.⁵ Less than a year later, the first volunteers under the alien enlistment program were sworn in at the 7720th Replacement Depot in Sonthofen, Germany.

When Senator Lodge greeted the first contingent of recruits, he told them: “Above all we want you to feel that you do not enter the U.S. Army as mercenaries or as a foreign legion. You are very definitely volunteers in the world struggle for human freedom.”⁶ Lodge chose his words carefully to ensure that the right message got out. Dismissing concerns about the militarization of Europe’s stateless populations, he emphasized that the purpose of the Lodge Act was simply to help Europeans defend Europe. The same theme was struck by the Army’s official public affairs magazine, which described the process by telling a hypothetical story of an ordinary recruit, “John Doe”:

4. The U.S. military maintained contingency plans for the mobilization of European refugees in wartime. On 7 June 1949, for example, the commander of U.S. forces in Austria was authorized, in the event of hostilities, to prescribe standards and procedures for the volunteer enlistment of civilians, including Austrian citizens and aliens. See Memorandum for CINC EUCOM, CG USFA from MG Bolte, Director Plans and Operations, 7 June 1949, box 10, JCS Geographic Files, 1948-1950, RG 218, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereinafter cited as NA).

5. For the provisions of the Lodge Act see Public Law 597, “An Act to provide for the enlistment of aliens in the Regular Army,” 2nd Session, 81st Congress.

6. Statement of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., 14 October 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as MHS). This event took place at Camp Kilmer in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Camp Kilmer was used as a staging camp for American troops during World War II. It was closed in 1949, reopened in 1950 to process troops for the Korean War, closed again in 1955, and finally reopened in 1956 to receive 30,000 Hungarians after the aborted Hungarian Revolution. At this time it was nicknamed “Camp Freedom.” See Camp Kilmer Papers, Military History Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (hereinafter cited as MHI).

A young man, he was once a loyal citizen of a European country – it could be any one of a half dozen or more that have been swallowed up in the aftermath of war and no longer exist as independent political entities. Doe and thousands of others like him fled his native land and can never go back. He found refuge in the United States Zone of Germany. Whether he be a displaced person, a stateless person, or an exile, his status for the purposes of this story is the same.⁷

On the ground, however, things were not so simple, and this portrait of John Doe hardly captured the reality confronting Europe's refugees. The article presented a sanitized American view of displaced nationalist and ethnic minorities, glossing over the fears and concerns of European states that had been ravaged by war and were now enduring the harsh economic conditions and fragmented politics of the postwar years.

Senator Lodge, for his part, envisioned alien enlistment as only the first step in a more ambitious program to supplement U.S. forces in their confrontation with the Soviet Union. The following year, he made his third attempt to introduce a bill establishing a Volunteer Freedom Corps comprising expatriates, refugees, and escapees from Eastern Europe.⁸ The enlistees were to be grouped into infantry battalions of several hundred men each. Initially, the troops would be trained and stationed on the front lines of the Cold War in Germany, and possibly in Austria. They were to be organized into

7. Joe C. Lambert, "These Aliens Also Serve," *Army Information Digest* 6 (November 1951), pp. 39-42. Procedures for recruitment were covered under U.S. Army Regulation 601-249.

8. Lodge introduced HR 6138, 79th Congress, 2d Session, 15 April 1946 and then HR 2162, 80th Congress, 1st Session, 24 February 1947. The bills were titled "Bill to Create a United States Foreign Legion," and both failed. Copies of the bills can be found in Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. See also Lodge's proposal in *Look* magazine (14 September 1948). On 25 January 1951 a Volunteer Freedom Corps bill was also introduced in the House of Representatives. See 82 Congress, 1st Session, HR 2098. Lodge introduced two bills in the Senate, one to create the Volunteer Freedom Corps (S.238) and one to increase the number of alien enlistments in the U.S. Army (S.239). Senator Edwin Carl Johnson of Colorado also introduced a bill (S.609) to recruit a million soldiers from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East and West Germany.

units by their geographic origin, and were to be equipped with distinct uniforms, markings, ceremonies, and flags to denote the specific ethnic or national background of the soldiers. All those who completed a satisfactory period of enlistment could emigrate to the United States and apply for citizenship. In the event of war, the battalions would fight under American officers as part of a U.S. infantry division.

Lodge had nursed the idea of raising an alien army since the Second World War. As a volunteer in the U.S. Army from 1944 to 1946, he had been impressed by reports that Germans employed disaffected Russians against the Soviet Union, under the command of General Andrei Vlasov.⁹ When Lodge returned to the Senate in 1946 after a two-year leave of absence, he began publicly campaigning for an anti-Communist corps. To avoid any suggestion that his proposal was linked with unsavory organizations, he downplayed references to the “foreign legion” and to General Vlasov’s Nazi-backed forces.¹⁰ Instead, he stressed that his program would mobilize the resources of the Free World and help balance the disparity between the massive Soviet Army and the much smaller ground forces deployed by the United States.¹¹ Because Lodge viewed his proposal for alien

9. See Report of the Proceedings of the Committee on the Armed Services, S.273. Executive Session, 11 July 1949, Vol. 1, p. 3. In 1944, the U.S. Army began looking at the feasibility of recruiting and employing alien forces under American command. See Truman Smith, “Notes on Shall America Organize a Foreign Legion,” Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. For a recent study of General Vlasov’s forces see Catherine Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). See also Strik Strikfeldt, *Against Stalin and Hitler 1941-1945. Memoir of the Russian Liberation Movement*, trans. David Footman (London: Macmillan, 1970).

10. See, for example, letter, Lodge to Daniel James, 12 January 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

11. “Crisis in Military Manpower,” Speech of the Honorable Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. in the Senate of the United States, 20 November 1947; Statement of Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. before the U.S. Senate,

enlistment as a way to build support for the Volunteer Freedom Corps, he campaigned hard for both initiatives, lobbying veterans' groups, writing articles, and encouraging others to write in support of the proposals.¹²

Lodge also prodded the military to back his ideas. In 1947, Kenneth Royall, Secretary of the Army, wrote to Lodge stating that he agreed with the initiatives in principle. But after consulting with the State Department, Royall withdrew his support, arguing that the proposal's "disadvantages outweigh

14 September 1950. The U.S. occupation force in Austria offers one example of the scope of the American demobilization and its impact on the U.S. forward presence in Europe. Initially the United States had over 47,000 troops spread throughout the American zone and in the U.S. sector of Vienna. By 1947, U.S. forces numbered only about 12,000. See *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1946, Vol. II, p. 691; Report of the U.S. High Commissioner for Austria, Final Report, vol. III, pp. 311-2. See also John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1952). Exacerbating the postwar drawdown, Congress allowed the Selective Service Act to expire in 1948, and there was widespread opposition to proposals for Universal Military Training. See Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, pp.107-138. Lodge frequently stated that supplementing America's limited military manpower was his principal reason for his proposals. See, for example, Statement of Senator Lodge to the Committee on Armed Services, 31 March 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. For a recent study of U.S. estimates of Soviet postwar military capabilities, see Philip A. Karber and Jerald A. Combs, "The United States, NATO and the Soviet Threat to Western Europe: Military Estimates and Policy Options, 1945 –1963," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 399-430. For a critique of the Karber and Combs analysis see Matthew Evangelista, "The 'Soviet Threat': Intentions, Capabilities, and Context," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 439- 449.

12. Lodge pressed the Republican Party and fellow legislators to support the bill. See letter, Ralph E. Flanders, Republican National Committee, to Lodge, 15 April 1949, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS and letter, Lodge to Chan Gurney, Chairman Committee of Armed Services, 30 April 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. Lodge was the first to coin the term "Volunteer Freedom Corps." See letter, Lodge to Anderson, 13 April 1955, C.D. Jackson Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereafter cited as DDE). On Lodge's letter-- and article--writing campaign, see, for example, the letter from Lodge to Herbert Elliston, Editor, Washington Post, 6 January 1949, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. Among other publications, articles appeared in *Life* magazine(2 October 1950).

the advantages.” In 1949, however, the Defense Department and State Department reversed course and offered to endorse Lodge’s proposal.¹³ Even then, however, both departments took a cautious approach. In 1951, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) supported alien recruitment plans but warned that “under no conditions is it desirable to form a United States Foreign Legion” or create the appearance of an organization of mercenary troops fighting alongside U.S. forces.¹⁴

13. Letter, Royall to Lodge, 26 December 1947, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS and letter, Royall to Lodge, 1 March 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. Charles E. Bohlen from the State Department warned that “high-ranking” Army officers in Europe were against the proposal. See letter, Bohlen to Senator Chan Gurney, 18 February 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. One military leader opposed to the corps was the High Commissioner for Germany, General Lucius D. Clay. See *The Papers of Lucius D. Clay. Germany, 1945-1949*, Vol. 1, ed. Jean Edward Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1974), pp. 315-316, 504-505. The State Department Policy Planning Staff studied the potential use of Soviet refugees, but did not endorse their use in military forces. See “Utilization of Refugees from the Soviet Union in U.S. National Interest,” 19 February 1948. *The State Department Policy Planning Staff*, Vol. II (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983), pp. 88-102. Lodge also wrote to the Department of Defense asking them to review his proposal and make suggestions. See letter, Lodge to Major General Wilton B. Persons, 2 November 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. See also letter, Lodge to Omar Bradley, Army Chief of Staff, 25 May 1949, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS; Report of the Proceedings of the Committee on the Armed Services, S.273. Executive Session, 11 July 1949, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6.

14. Report by the Ad Hoc Committee to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Enlistment of Aliens in United States Armed Forces, 14 March 1951, box 75, Decimal File 51-3, RG 218, NA. The ad hoc committee was headed by U.S. Army Lieutenant General E.H. Brooks, Vice Admiral J.W. Roper, and Air Force Major General R.E. Nugent. The Army proposal referred to by the ad hoc committee was a staff study entitled “Utilization of Foreign Military Manpower.” The State Department’s reservations can be found in memorandum to Mr. Cabot, subject: Senate Bill No. 238 Proposing Enlistment of Aliens in the United States Army as a Volunteer Freedom Corps, 7 February 1951 box 3, Records of the Office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA; note, meeting in Yingling’s Office, box 3, Records of the Office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA; Senate Bill No. 238 Proposing Enlistment of Aliens in the United States Army Volunteer Freedom Corps, 7 February 1951, box 3, Records of the Office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA.

When Lodge was campaigning on behalf of the Corps, he encountered unexpected opposition from leaders of black civil rights groups, who accused him of supporting conservative Southern politicians in their efforts to prevent the integration of the Army. “This smoke screen laid by Mr. Lodge,” they wrote, “to draw attention away from segregation and discrimination in our armed forces, is fooling no one in this country. He is trying to cover up his alter ego, the reactionary Southern bloc.”¹⁵

The black leaders feared that alien recruitment would be used to squeeze black soldiers out of the armed forces. Lodge quickly responded to these accusations, reaffirming his commitment to desegregation in the military. Still, this episode had adumbrated the main drawback of the proposal: When the Corps was viewed through the lens of cultural or national identity, it could easily be misinterpreted as a threat, empowering one group at the expense of others.

Despite Lodge’s active promotion of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, he was unable to push through appropriate legislation. A more modest bill was ushered through the House of Representatives by Congressman Charles J. Kersten, who succeeded in amending the Mutual Security Act to spend \$100 million on the mobilization of “iron curtain nationals in the defense of the North Atlantic area.” Once this legislation was adopted, the JCS prepared a revised plan for a covert army under the guise of the U.S. military labor service organization in Europe.¹⁶ This secret army would help defend NATO in the event of a Soviet invasion.

15. Letter, “To Whom it May Concern,” Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS. See also letter, Clifford E. Kellogg to Lodge, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS and letter, Lodge to James Forrestal, Secretary of Defense, 19 April 1948, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38, MHS.

16. The JCS plan was called the “Outline Proposal.” See Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, pp. 74-5, US Army

The JCS looked favorably upon the proposal for a covert armed force. The U.S. military already had a longstanding practice of employing displaced civilians. Even before the end of World War II, U.S. officials sensed that they would have to rely on foreign personnel to help administer the occupation. Initially, planners estimated that over 200,000 civilians would be required to augment U.S. troops. Although U.S. officials assumed that the process of recruiting labor would be gradual and methodical, the rapid redeployment and demobilization of U.S. troops forced the United States to rely on foreign nationals far sooner and in far greater numbers than anticipated.

The outbreak of the Cold War further increased the U.S. Army's dependence on foreign labor in Europe. In fact, from 1946 to the early 1950s the United States had more civilian employees than military personnel in the European theater. Although two-thirds of the U.S. labor force in Germany and Austria were native Germans and Austrians, the United States also employed a labor service force composed of displaced Polish, Czechoslovak, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Albanian, and Bulgarian expatriates, organized into units by nationality.¹⁷ Although the JCS were unenthusiastic about Lodge's proposal for a foreign legion, they did believe that an existing pool of foreign labor would be an appropriate target of the funds authorized by the Kersten amendment. They also were in favor of

Center of Military History, Washington, DC (hereinafter cited as CMH) and Narrative Summary of Major Events and Problems, OACofS, G-3, 20-2.3 AA, CMH, p. 2. For the provisions of the Kersten Amendment see Congressional Record, 82d Congress, 1st Session, 1951, 97, pt. 16: 10226-63, A5214-16; Statutes at Large, vol. 55, 373-4.

17. Resume of Army Roll-Up Following World War II, File OCMH-39, CMH, pp. 83-87; Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, p. 75, CMH.

keeping the whole operation secret because it would be less likely to run into opposition from either the West European governments or the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, Lodge was unhappy about the military's failure to mobilize Europe's stateless populations. The JCS never finalized a plan to implement the Kersten amendment. Lodge was equally dissatisfied with the military's handling of the Lodge Act. He sent repeated letters to Army officials complaining that they were not aggressive enough in recruiting aliens.¹⁸ Lodge wanted the Army to streamline and simplify registration, testing, and background investigations. He also wanted the military to appoint an energetic, committed general to oversee the project. However, the Army, faced with very limited resources in the wake of the post-World War II demobilization, was unwilling to devote much effort to the project.

Hence, Lodge's alien recruitment legislation proved spectacularly unsuccessful overall. When the U.S. Army tried to extend recruitment to Austria, the commanders of U.S. forces in that country rejected the idea, claiming, among other things, that only a few qualified applicants were available. For all of Europe, there were only six thousand applicants, of whom two-thirds were immediately rejected as unqualified by the Army. Of the 2,366 applications accepted during the first year, fewer than four

18. See, for example, letter, Lodge to James Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, 26 November 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS. Lodge's criticism came after a visit to Europe in 1951 where he was briefed by the U.S. European Command. The briefing papers and Lodge's notes are in Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

19. EUCOM Report, enclosure 26, Statistics as of 16 July 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

hundred qualified for enlistment.¹⁹ The results left the Army all the more unenthusiastic about the program's future.

Despite the inauspicious results of the Army's recruiting program, Lodge continued to receive letters and proposals from émigrés and refugees supporting the idea of a volunteer army consisting of Europe's stateless. The letters reinforced Lodge's determination to seek the aid of displaced persons in pursuit of his larger goal to unite a free Europe under American leadership. Virtually absent from this correspondence was any discussion of the views, fears, and concerns that European governments and citizens had about the notion of militarizing stateless groups. One proposal, called Operation Crowbar, envisioned the formation of an entire volunteer army of displaced Russians who would pry open the Iron Curtain. The plan's authors promised that they could raise a force of up to 50,000 Russians with military experience and eventually field fifty divisions.²⁰ Bolstered by these optimistic assessments and promises of support, Lodge continued to pursue the idea during the last few years of his term in the Senate.

After Lodge was defeated in the 1951 election, he became a key figure in Eisenhower's presidential campaign and then was brought into the administration as the ambassador to the United Nations. In that capacity, Lodge persuaded his old friend Robert Cutler, who had been appointed a

20. Typed Manuscript, "Realities and Actions," 25 May 1951, The Tolstoy Foundation, 510 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS. Lodge arranged for Ilia Tolstoy, a representative of the foundation, to meet with representatives of the Department of State and the Department of Defense. See also the numerous letters from displaced Europeans all over world volunteering to serve in the new corps. See Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 38-39, MHS.

special assistant to Eisenhower, to raise the Volunteer Freedom Corps proposal with the president.²¹

Lodge's timing was propitious. Eisenhower wanted to undertake bold initiatives in foreign affairs, especially in his area of greatest expertise, European security. The Volunteer Freedom Corps fit in perfectly.

The Eisenhower Presidency -- a New Life for the Corps

As a military commander, Eisenhower had been directly involved in European security issues for over a decade. He had served as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force during World War II, as the first commander of U.S. occupation forces in Germany, and later as U.S. Army Chief of Staff and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His experience led him to conclude that European security eventually would have to rest with the Europeans themselves: "I have come to believe that Europe's security problem is never going to be solved satisfactorily until there exists a U.S. of Europe."²² With that in mind, Eisenhower detected

21. H.W. Brands incorrectly concluded that the proposal for the corps came from C.D. Jackson. See H.W. Brands, Jr., "A Cold War Foreign Legion? The Eisenhower Administration and the Volunteer Freedom Corps," *Military Affairs* 52 (January 1988), p.7. Lodge's role as the drafter of the initial proposal is confirmed by letter, Robert Cutler to Lodge, 26 January 1953, Henry Cabot Lodge II. Lodge-Eisenhower Correspondence, P-373, reel 3, MHS and letter, Lodge to Culter, 9 February 1953, Henry Cabot Lodge II. Lodge-Eisenhower Correspondence, P-373, reel 3, MHS, and Memorandum for Mr. Robert Cutler, 4 February 1953, Henry Cabot Lodge II. Lodge-Eisenhower Correspondence, P-373, reel 3, MHS.

22. Louis Galambos, et al., eds., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower. NATO and the Campaign of 1952*, Vol. XII, p. 340. In a similar vein Eisenhower wrote to Robert Lovett on 13 December 1951 that "the economic and military strength of Western Europe cannot be fully developed as long as the region is just a hodge-podge of sovereign political territories." See *ibid.*, p. 781.

“a great deal of sense in the whole idea” of raising a legion composed of displaced foreign nationals.²³

Enlisting Europe’s unwanted and refugee national groups to fight together for a common cause would, he believed, serve as a powerful demonstration of the potential for Europeans to provide for their own collective security.

One of Eisenhower’s first actions vis-à-vis the NSC was to order that the proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps be added to the opening agenda.²⁴ The Corps was exactly the kind of project the president could use to ensure that the NSC and the White House would play a more activist role in developing and implementing new initiatives for European security. An NSC staff member wrote at the time:

The work of the NSC staff has picked up with a loud bang. [Robert] Bobby Cutler... He’s making things hum, bless him. Ike is breathing on the council’s neck and Bobby is breathing on ours. It’s remarkable how this cumbersome machinery has picked up speed lately. So much, that I’m afraid they are generating too much speed, or at least too much pressure.²⁵

23. *Ibid.*, p. 545. As the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Eisenhower testified before Congress about the concept. He also discussed various proposals with his old friend Frank Willard, Deputy Director of the CIA Allen Dulles and Army Chief of Staff James Lawton Collins. See, for example, Eisenhower’s discussion on the plan proposed by Frank Rockwell Barnett, “Cold War, Atomic War or Free Slavic Legion,” in *ibid.*, pp. 454-455, 654-655. Barnett also circulated his proposal to Lodge and other U.S. senators. See letter, Frank Barnett to Senator Paul Douglas, 8 February 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

24. Memorandum of the Executive Secretary National Security Council, subject: Proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps, 14 February 1953, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, pp. 6-7 and Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, pp. 75.

25. Letter to Clovis E. Byers, 19 February 1953, Clovis E. Byers Papers, box 19, HI. For analyses of policy formulation during the early days of the Eisenhower administration, see Klaus Larres, “Eisenhower and the First Forty Days after Stalin’s Death: The Incompatibility of *Détente* and Political Warfare,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 6 (July 1995), pp. 431-469; and Stephen G. Rabe, “Eisenhower Revisionism: A Decade of Scholarship,” *Diplomatic History* 17 (Winter 1993), pp. 97-115. For a

Of the new foreign policy ideas floating around the White House and the NSC, the Volunteer Freedom Corps was clearly one to which the president gave highest priority..

With Eisenhower in attendance, the National Security Council took up the issue at a meeting on 18 February 1953. Outlining a plan that sounded almost exactly like Lodge's initiatives in the Senate, Eisenhower proposed an army of 250,000 stateless, single, anti-Communist young men from countries behind the Iron Curtain. Successful service in the corps, according to the plan, could later qualify the soldiers for American citizenship.²⁶

Although Eisenhower's proposal was similar to the earlier initiatives, the President's enthusiasm for the project was his own. The formation of the Corps appealed not only to his desire to further European integration, but also to his commitment to "burden sharing." Eisenhower had long been concerned about the great responsibility "now resting on the youth of America in the world struggle against Communism." A more equitable defense burden, in his view, would shore up American morale, and the Corps would be a cost-saving measure for the United States, since the East European refugees would not be paid as much as American troops. Reductions in defense spending would allow the United States to focus on economic growth, while the Corps would also increase Europe's

contrasting view, see Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace. How Eisenhower Shaped and Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Harold Stassen, and Marshall Houts, *Eisenhower: Turning the World Toward Peace* (St. Paul: Merrill/Magnus, 1991).

26. Memorandum, Discussion at the 132nd meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, 18 February 1953, 19 February 1953, box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, NSC series, DDE, pp. 3-4; Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, pp. 74-5, CMH; Narrative Summary of Major Events and Problems, OACofS, G-3, 20-2.3 AA., CMH, p. 2.

contributions to common Western efforts in the Cold War.²⁷ At the same time, the Corps was consistent with Eisenhower's election-year pledge to "roll back" the Communist threat in Eastern Europe. Small, inexpensive, low-risk initiatives like the Volunteer Freedom Corps would help foster the appearance of an activist--but fiscally responsible--presidency.²⁸

As a result, Eisenhower insisted that the proposal be thoroughly and sympathetically studied, with an eye to prompt implementation. At an NSC meeting on 25 February 1953, Army Chief of Staff General J. Lawton Collins was optimistic about the Corps, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles registered only mild concerns.²⁹ Neither raised the question of European governments' sensitivities about stateless groups.³⁰ Robert Cutler pointed out that the French would be worried about provoking

27. For an example of the president's concern over the expense of U.S. ground forces see Letter, Lodge to Anderson, 25 April 1955, box 19, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC series, Briefing Notes Subseries, DDE.

28. There is no record of a discussion on using the corps to fulfill a "campaign promise" in the memorandum of the NSC discussions. Lodge, however, apparently brought up the point when he first talked to General Willis Crittenger about the project. See handwritten notes, 17 February 53, Crittenger Papers, MHI.

29. Memorandum, Discussion at the 134th Meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, 25 February 1953, 26 February 1953, box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, NSC series, DDE, pp. 3-5; Narrative Summary of Major Events and Problems, OACofS, G-3, 20-2.3 AA, CMH, p. 2. Prior to the NSC meeting, General Collins had generally been opposed to a U.S. sponsored corps on the grounds that it was not practical. See Galambos et. al., eds., *Papers*, Vol. XII, p. 654 and letter, Marshall to Lodge, 7 September 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

30. In contrast to Secretary Dulles' comments at the February 25 NSC meeting, State Department representatives, in evaluating the 1951 Lodge Bill, noted that there was almost universal German opposition to the measure. See memorandum to Mr. Cabot, subject: Senate Bill No. 238 Proposing Enlistment of Aliens in the United States Army as a Volunteer Freedom Corps, 7 February 1951 box 3, Records of the Office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA; note, meeting in

the Soviet Union. The President dismissed that objection, arguing he did not see why the United States could refrain from adopting “our own” policy. “The French showed no hesitation,” he added, “in recruiting Germans for the French foreign legion.”

In line with the President's enthusiasm, the NSC approved the Volunteer Freedom Corps and referred the issue to an ad hoc committee for further elaboration.³¹ Eisenhower selected a retired Lieutenant General, Willis D. Crittenberger, to head a group composed of officials from the State Department, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the Psychological Strategy Board. The President asked Lodge to help organize the effort. This arrangement seemed promising because Lodge and Crittenberger were old friends. Before the war, Lodge was a commissioned officer in the Army reserve, and Crittenberger helped him prepare for the qualifying examination to become a first lieutenant. During World War II, when Lodge temporarily relinquished his Senate seat, he served on Crittenberger's staff in Europe. Moreover, after the war ended, Crittenberger served as the Commander of the First U.S. Army and had responsibility for Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, where the first aliens recruited under the Lodge Act were processed and trained. Lodge

Yingling's Office, box 3, Records of the Office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA; and Senate Bill No. 238 Proposing Enlistment of Aliens in the United States Army Volunteer Freedom Corps, 7 February 1951, box 3, Records of the office of European Regional Affairs, 1946-1953, RG 59, NA. H.W. Brands incorrectly states that Dulles was openly critical of the program in the NSC meetings and claims that Dulles raised the issue of European concerns. See Brands, “A Cold War Foreign Legion?” p. 8. According to the memorandum of discussion for the meeting, that point was raised by Robert Cutler.

31. NCS Action Number 724, 25 February 1953, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, pp. 6-7. The committee members from the Psychological Strategy Board were Assistant Director for Plans Edward L. Taylor and Acting Director George Morgan. Charles B. Marshall was the Department of State representative on the committee.

also knew that Crittenberger was a friend of the President and an enthusiastic supporter of the Volunteer Freedom Corps.

Lodge wasted no time in relaying Eisenhower's views to Crittenberger. To emphasize the importance and immediacy of the mission, Lodge added that General Collins also favored the proposal because the Korean War had forced the U.S. Army to recruit "too many Negroes," and that alien enlistment offered an alternative source of troops.³² Crittenberger responded that he was "very much interested in any plan, in which other nationals do some of the dying instead of American boys."³³ The general saw many ways in which the Corps would be good for the United States.

With this encouragement from Lodge, Crittenberger set to work immediately. His committee received input from the relevant federal agencies and interviewed senior legislative, government, and military officials, most of whom were already favorably disposed toward the plan.³⁴ C.D. Jackson, the

32. This comment undercuts Collins's claim in his autobiography that he was firmly committed to integration. See J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1979), pp. 354-8. The evidence suggests that although Collins was not wholly opposed to integration, he was concerned about the pace of allowing blacks into the Army. According to one briefing, he expressed two concerns about integration. First, he wanted to keep the number of black soldiers in combat infantry units at no more than 10 percent, on the grounds that higher percentages might cause problems. Second, he was concerned about a high percentage of blacks in service because of their "low mental or test scores." General Collins advocated a process of gradual integration. See Memo for the Rcd, signed Col. Henry G. McFeely, Acting Ch, Proc & Dist Div, G-1, 6 Nov 52, box 22, J. Lawton Collins Papers, DDE; letter to Lieutenant General A. A. McAuliffe, 10 September 1951, box 22, J. Lawton Collins Papers, DDE.

33. Crittenberger's handwritten notes, 27 February 1953, Crittenberger Papers, MHI. See also letter, Lodge to Frank Pace Jr., Secretary of the Army, 31 October 1951, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Legislative Subject Files, box 39, MHS.

34. While Crittenberger's committee was at work, the Army initiated its own effort to revive and update earlier proposals. The revised study and several subsequent reports by the Operation's Policy Planning

President's special assistant for international affairs, also testified. Jackson had served as Eisenhower's psychological warfare expert during World War II and worked with European refugees after the war.³⁵

He was strongly in favor of the Volunteer Freedom Corps. In addition to Jackson's support, the committee heard from Lodge, Cutler, Collins, General James A. Van Fleet, and a representative of the Commanding General of the U.S. Army in Europe. All endorsed the concept in one form or another.

On 20 April 1953 the ad hoc committee submitted its report, laying out the purported advantages of a Volunteer Freedom Corps. According to the report, the Corps would be a positive, dramatic symbol of resistance against Soviet and Communist aggression, undercut morale in the Eastern Bloc, and encourage defections. The program would also provide motivation and "honorable employment" for refugees from the Communist bloc. Finally, the committee believed that the Corps's contribution to NATO would enhance the respectability of stateless groups.³⁶

Branch were forwarded to the ad hoc committee. See Narrative Summary of Major Events and Problems, OACofS, G-3, 20-2.3 AA, CMH, p. 2. For the State Department's input, see memorandum for LT GEN Willis D. Crittenger, subject: State Department Comments on the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 13 April 1953, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-1961, DDE.

35. For more detail on C.D. Jackson's role in shaping the administration's European security policy, see Valur Ingimundarson, "Containing the Offensive: The 'Chief of the Cold War: and the Eisenhower Administration's German Policy,'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 480-495.

36. Information on the Crittenger report is from, "A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary, Volunteer Freedom Corps," 20 May 1953, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE; memorandum for record, subject: Proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps. 16 March 1953, box 1, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-61, Psychological Strategy Board Center Files, DDE; Narrative Summary of Major Events and Problems, OACofS, G-3, CMH 20-2.3 AA, pp. 3-4; Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, p. 76, CMH; letter to Crittenger, 10 April 1953, box 1, White

In addition to providing a strong endorsement of the Corps, the committee gave detailed suggestions about how the proposal should be implemented. Initial preparations would be conducted in secret until the plan had been finalized and the consent of the allies had been obtained. Once the program was activated, the U.S. commands in Europe would mount a public relations campaign to encourage recruitment. At the same time, they would try to avoid antagonizing the Soviet Union by not soliciting defections overtly.

One of the reasons that the committee's report was so optimistic is that the United States already had considerable experience in employing displaced persons through its European labor service, which provided civilian support for the U.S. Army in Europe. However, the committee failed to consider that the labor service battalions were not an appropriate standard by which to judge the potential of a Volunteer Freedom Corps. The civilian workers were employed mostly as guards and technicians, with standards for enlistment far below those required for military service. These units could hardly serve as a credible source of recruits for combat forces. In addition, although the German

House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-61, Psychological Strategy Board Central Files, DDE; and memorandum from C.D. Jackson, subject: Present Status of Work in Crittenberger Committee, box 1, White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-61, Psychological Strategy Board, Central Files Series, DDE. Crittenberger's report differed from the president's proposal in one significant respect. It dropped the suggestion that the corps be employed in the Korean War (an idea also supported by Harold Stassen, Director of the Mutual Security Administration, and Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson during the NSC meeting on 25 February). General Collins also doubted the feasibility of using the troops to serve in the Korean War. When the president inquired about the idea at an NSC meeting on 20 May, Crittenberger reported that the proposal was probably not practical. See, memorandum, Discussion at the 134th Meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, 25 February 1953, 26 February 1953, box 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower: Papers as President, NSC series, DDE, pp. 3-5; memorandum, subject: Discussion of the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, 20 May 1953, 23 May 1953, box 4, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, 1953-61-NSC series, DDE, pp. 3-7.

and Austrian governments tolerated alien labor service units, the employment of displaced persons for civilian purposes was a far cry from the notion of organizing heavily armed military commands that, by their nature, would have promoted strong ethnic and nationalist identities.

In the ad hoc committee's report, as well as in the deliberations of the NSC, there was no discussion of the sensitivities of America's European allies. The committee all but ignored a study by the State Department warning that the corps would embroil the United States in national and ethnic disputes regarding the fate of peoples in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Armenia, the Caucasus, Georgia, and Belorussia. The committee did acknowledge that certain émigré groups in the United States might try to use the corps to manipulate U.S. policies in support of their own causes, but the report lacked any analysis of European governments' attitudes toward stateless groups.³⁷ How would the Europeans feel about U.S. efforts to militarize stateless populations and fan the nationalist hopes of displaced persons? How could the United States reconcile the promotion of European integration with the promise of U.S. citizenship for soldiers who were supposed to be fighting on behalf of Europe? All the report offered was a passing note of caution:

The reaction of the peoples of a nation [to]... a force not integrally a part of a national army and composed of several nationalities may have some bearing on that nation's position concerning the proposal.³⁸

37. Memorandum for LT GEN Willis D. Crittenger, subject: State Department Comments on the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 13 April 1953, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-1961, DDE. Not only did the State Department point out the problem of aligning U.S. prestige with ethnic and nationalist groups, it also argued that if the program went forward, distinctive markings, patches and flags must not be used. Eliminating these trappings would help soften the distinctive ethnic or national character of the units. This recommendation was also ignored. See pp. 18-19.

38. A report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary on A Volunteer Freedom Corps, 20 May 1953, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs,

Apart from that cursory observation, the committee could find no serious objection to establishing the corps.

The results of the committee's report were telling. Through the instrument of the NSC and the ability it provided Eisenhower to enlist like-minded aides such as Lodge, Crittenger, Cutler, and Jackson, the President was able to overcome the reservations of the foreign policy and military bureaucracies. This in turn caused him to overlook the likely responses of the West European governments.

European Opposition and the Failure of the Proposal

As it turned out, there were many potential sources of opposition to the arming of stateless European groups. During the early postwar years, many Germans and Austrians displayed a deep animosity toward their displaced populations.³⁹ In these devastated, war-torn countries, refugees were seen as unwelcome competitors for food, housing, heating fuel, and jobs. Local residents and officials claimed that the displaced brought nothing other than disease and crime. Some even argued that the

NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, p. 15. The issues raised by the State Department were all but ignored in the report. See, memorandum for LT GEN Willis D. Crittenger, subject: State Department Comments on the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 13 April 1953, White House Office, National Security Council staff papers, 1953-1961, DDE.

39. See, for example, Rainer Schulze, "Growing Discontent: Relations Between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany After the Second World War," *West Germany Under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1997), pp. 199-234, and Leonard Dinnerstein, "German Attitudes Toward Jewish Displaced Persons," in Hans L. Trefousse, ed., *Germany and America: Essays on Problems of International Relations and Immigration*, (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1980), pp. 241-247.

preeminent initial threat in postwar Europe was the lawlessness of bands of displaced persons. This concern was shared by the command of U.S. Forces in Austria, which reported in 1945 that “displaced Allied personnel caused more concern to the military than did the local civil population.”⁴⁰

The situation was further inflamed by continued anti-Semitism in Europe. The effect of anti-Semitism on occupation polices, local communities, and displaced persons was often quite complex. For example, some U.S. officials insisted that American forces and the Austrian police tolerated illegal activities because many of the displaced were Jewish and neither the U.S. forces nor the newly liberated Austrians wanted to appear anti-Semitic.⁴¹ It is doubtful that these claims were wholly accurate, but even if they were, the latent anti-Semitism in the region clearly strained relations between the displaced people and the local population.

The clash of cultures inevitably diminished European sympathy for and tolerance of displaced groups. An official U.S. report on conditions in Austria in 1948 acknowledged that the Austrians did not want “to increase their population with people who were foreign in culture, tradition, language, and morals, nor did they want politically dissident groups like Yugoslavs, Poles, or White Russians.”⁴² The

40. USFA – History, 5 July to 30 Sept 1945, USFA Historical File, box 1, RG 260, NA.

41. See, for example, the letters written by Major Charles Arthur Robertson who served as the military governor of Wells, Austria. See especially, letter, 10 April 1945, Charles Arthur Robertson Papers, HI. Robertson himself, it is worth noting, punctuated his letters with disparaging remarks about “Jews.” Evidently he was not as concerned as other officials allegedly were about manifesting his anti-Semitism. See also, Inspection with Landeshauptmann Hofrat Dr. Eigl at Vocklabruck on 9 June 1945; dated 12 June 45, box 7, John D. Hartigan Papers, HI; April-June 1946 USFA Report, USFA Historical File, box 1, RG 260, NA, pp. 159-60.

42. April-June 1946 USFA Report, USFA Historical File, box 1, RG 260, NA, p. 157.

proposed arming of refugees would only exacerbate the fear and hatred felt toward these groups.

Germans and Austrians already resented the occupation by Allied forces. No matter what the announced purpose of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, the establishment of well-armed, well-fed groups of displaced individuals was bound to be seen as a burdensome and dangerous mercenary force.

These sentiments persisted even when economic and internal security conditions improved in later years. Stateless groups, it was thought, could still threaten postwar Europe's young and untested democracies, and the armed camps of expatriates would become breeding grounds for destabilizing revolutionary movements.⁴³ The Volunteer Freedom Corps seemed highly inappropriate at a time when democratic gains were still fragile. This was all the more the case because the new political systems in Germany and Austria were grounded in anti-militarist values. In the early postwar years the U.S. occupation was designed precisely to encourage the Germans and Austrians to reject their Nazi and militarist pasts.⁴⁴ Although the outbreak of the Cold War compelled the West European states to

43. For a contemporary assessment of the threat posed by stateless communities to European stability, see the analysis by Lawrence Frenkel, who worked as UNRRA's Chief Public Health Officer for Austria, in Lawrence Frenkel Papers, folder 1, HI.

44. See, for example, Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War. The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Sebastian Meissl and Klaus-Dieter Mulley and Oliver Rathkolb, eds. *Verdrängte Schuld, verfehlte Sühne. Entnazifizierung in Österreich 1945-1955* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986); James F. Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Richard L. Merritt, *Democracy Imposed. U.S. Occupation Policy and the German Public, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). For a contrasting view on the impact of the U.S. occupation of Germany see Edward N. Petterson, *The American Occupation of Germany, Retreat into Victory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977).

rearm, anti-military sentiment was still salient and the proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps ran counter to these pacifist sentiments.⁴⁵

The tension was further exacerbated by pressure from the United States. Leaders in both Germany and Austria felt compelled to support the defense of Western Europe, but their endorsements of U.S.-led initiatives exposed them to charges of allowing the United States to dictate Europe's future. In addition to fearing the consequences of American hegemony, some German and Austrian officials were concerned about the reaction of the Soviet Union and other East-bloc countries. The Nazi and Italian Fascist reliance on expatriate populations as a pretext for aggression was still fresh on European minds. Many feared that the Soviet Union would seize upon the Volunteer Freedom Corps as an excuse to attack Western Europe, portraying the Corps as a threat to Soviet security.⁴⁶ For all these

45. The history of Germany's postwar rearmament is common knowledge, but it is less well known that Austria also rearmed during the Cold War under a covert program sponsored by the Americans. See American Legation, subject: Organization of the Austrian Army, 18 June 1948, box 187, RG 263, NA; American Legation, subject: The Security of Austria, 9 July 1948, Box 188, RG 263, NA; Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary on the Position of the United States with Respect to Providing Military Assistance to Nations of the Non-Soviet World, NSC 14, File 1574, pp. 2-4, George C. Marshall Center, Lexington, Virginia (hereafter cited as MC); Report to the National Security Council by the Department of State on the Austrian Treaty in the Council of Foreign Ministers, NSC 38, 8 December 1948, File 1574, MC, pp. 2-3; NSC 38/1 A Report to the National Security Council by the Secretary of Defense on the Future of U.S. Action with Respect to Austria, 16 June 1949, File 1574, MC, pp. 3,7-8.

46. Soviet leaders routinely complained about U.S. attempts to mobilize West European manpower. Khrushchev offered an example of Soviet views on U.S. collective security initiatives at the July 1955 plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. He declared that "the United States of America has in mind for a future world war, as in the past war, to let others fight for them, let others spill blood for them, with the help of equipment supplied to future 'allies.'" Cited in Vladislav M. Zubok, "CPSU Plenums, Leadership Struggles, and Soviet Cold War Politics," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* No. 10 (March 1998), p. 29.

reasons, any U.S. proposal to organize displaced Europeans was laced with potential threats and dangers.

Still, the fundamental shortcoming of the proposal for a Corps was its unrealistic assumption about the dynamics of European societies that had only recently emerged from a devastating war. Almost every country in Western Europe lacked a sufficiently tolerant civil society that would permit the easy integration of armed displaced ethnic and nationalist groups. By organizing and arming refugees, the Volunteer Freedom Corps would only have increased fear and suspicion. The ad hoc committee had ignored crucial issues of cultural, ethnic, and national identities.

Only after the committee report was forwarded to the NSC did the national security establishment raise serious objections with the President. Walter Bedell Smith, the Under Secretary of State, cautioned that the plan might cause a “hassle with our allies” and threaten ratification of the EDC, the plan for a unified European army. “They [the West European governments] will be frightened of the proposal,” Smith warned, “as they have lately become frightened of every other move we have made.”

General Omar Bradley, the JCS chairman, agreed. Despite these complaints, the President himself wanted to move forward, arguing that “this is a modest beginning for something which might grow and develop.”⁴⁷ The Europeans were weak and disorganized, he believed, and their fears of ethnic minorities and displaced nationalist groups could be overcome by concerted American leadership.

47. Memorandum, subject: Discussion of the 145th Meeting of the National Security Council on Wednesday, 20 May 1953, 23 May 1953, box 4, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, 1953-61-NSC series, DDE, pp. 3-7. Crittenberger’s report put the cost of six battalions at \$71 million, cheaper than U.S. troops, but probably more expensive than European national forces. General Bradley pointed out that because of the small size of the Corps there would be no “economy of scale,” making the program less economically viable. After debate, the president authorized the funds proposed under the Kersten Amendment (Mutual Security Act, 64 Stat. 373) to pay for the corps. See “A Report to the National

Despite growing apprehension about the practicality and desirability of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, the supporters urged Eisenhower to adopt the proposal at the next NSC meeting. General Crittenberger, assisted by Major General Clark Ruffner, had developed a plan to assemble the Corps's first six battalions over a fifteen-month period.⁴⁸ For the first time, however, Eisenhower appeared cautious when the next NSC meeting was convened. He wanted to do what was right, he said, and "cause the enemy every possible difficulty," but he did not want to "kill our friends."⁴⁹ The President settled on an executive order implementing the Corps as a joint State Department and Defense Department initiative, provided that U.S. diplomats could obtain consent from the West European allies.⁵⁰

Security Council by the ad hoc committee on NSC 143 on a Volunteer Freedom Corps," 5 May 1953, box 4, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, pp. 6-7; memorandum for LT GEN Willis D. Crittenberger, subject: State Department Comments on the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 13 April 1953, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-1961, DDE, pp. 16-17; memorandum for General Robert Cutler, subject: Volunteer Corps (NSC 143/2), 19 August 1953, OCB Files, Files, DDE.

48. Summary of PSB D-45, 22 June 1953, "Interim U.S. Psychological Plan for the Exploitation of Unrest in Satellite Europe, 24 June 1953, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE. The command of the U.S. Army in Europe raised several objections to Crittenberger's plan and proposed a number of additions and modifications. Although most of the recommended changes were adopted, the US Army in Europe remained skeptical of the Corps's practicality. Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, p. 75, CMH; message from CINCEUSEUR, 15 May 1954, box 75, Decimal File 51-3, RG 218, NA.

49. Memorandum, subject: discussion at the 150th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, 18 June 1953, 19 June 1953, box 4, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, NSC series, DDE.

50. *Ibid.* The wording of the above memorandum contrasts with the memorandum printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954*, Vol. VII, *Germany and Austria*, part 2, p. 1590, which states that "the President confirmed his authorization to proceed with the development of the Volunteer Freedom Corps (NSC 143/2) at such time as might be agreed upon by the Secretary of State and Mr.

Up to this point, the proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps had virtually ignored the implications for European domestic politics and for sensitive issues of cultural and national identity. Although the State Department had warned of potentially dire consequences--including the possible collapse of the West German government--if the Corps were set up, those misgivings were largely brushed aside. Much the same was true about the Department's concern that Soviet leaders would view the stationing of anti-Communist troops in Austria as a violation of the four-power occupation agreement. According to the State Department, the Austrians would not and could not agree to the program.⁵¹

In May 1953 senior State Department officials consulted with U.S. ambassadors and high commissioners in Europe. The diplomats warned that the formation of a Volunteer Freedom Corps would likely ignite European domestic hostility toward the stateless populations. On the basis of these concerns, the State Department recommended that implementation be postponed until after the September 1953 West German elections. Eisenhower concurred, but in October 1953 he argued that

C.D. Jackson.” This suggests that Jackson shared authority to initiate the program. The memorandum in the Eisenhower Library, however, states that Eisenhower asked Jackson to consult with Secretary Dulles (who had temporarily left the room). In fact, it appears that the State Department retained the authority to decide the right time to move forward with the project. See also, Summary of Major Events and Problems, Fiscal Year 1954, Policy Planning Branch, File 20-2.3 AA 1954, CMH, p. 2. There is no clear evidence, but a possible reason for Eisenhower's reluctance to push for the plan at this point was the vigorous Soviet “peace offensive” in the wake of Stalin's death, which evoked Eisenhower's own “Chance for Peace” speech at the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, D.C. on 16 April 1953. An aggressive new security initiative may have seemed inappropriate in the midst of the seeming turnaround in Soviet policy.

51. Memorandum for LT GEN Willis D. Crittenberger, subject: State Department Comments on the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 13 April 1953, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1953-1961, DDE, pp. 6,10.

the United States should encourage the newly elected West German government to sponsor the corps, backed by U.S. financial support. State Department officials spoke against this idea and insisted that it was first necessary to gauge British and French views at the Bermuda Conference in December.⁵²

Later on, the Department shelved the plan pending resolution of the EDC proposal.⁵³

A year later, with the plan still on hold, Eisenhower dispatched Crittenger to Europe to expedite the program. After a month of consultations with senior U.S. commanders in Europe and the U.S. ambassadors to Britain, France, and West Germany, Crittenger reported that military and diplomatic leaders all agreed that further consideration of the corps should be deferred until after the EDC debate, when the whole idea could be reappraised.⁵⁴

52. Memorandum for General Cutler, subject: Suggested West German Sponsorship of Volunteer Freedom Corps, 14 October 1953, OCB Files, DDE. The presidential briefing books for the Bermuda Conference contain no mention of the Volunteer Freedom Corps as a subject for discussion. See folders 1-6, Bermuda Conference Briefing Books, box 2, C.D. Jackson Records, 1953-1954, DDE.

53. Progress Report on NSC 143/2 Activation of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 3 August 1955, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, p. 1. For a discussion of the administration's role in the EDC debate see Rolf Steininger, "John Foster Dulles, The European Defense Community, and the German Question," Richard H. Immerman ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 79-108. See also Edward Fursden, *The European Defence Community. A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

54. Memorandum report from General Willis D. Crittenger to the Operations Coordinating Board, subject: Timing for the Implementation of the VFC, 11 May 1954, box 22, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-61, DDE. See also Minutes of the Ad Hoc Working Group Convened for the Implementation of NSC 143/2, box 8, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-61, OCB Secretariat Series, DDE; Top Secret Supplement, Annual Historical Report, Headquarters, U.S. Army, Europe (U), 1 January 1953 - 30 June 1954, p. 78, CMH; Summary of Major Events and Problems, Fiscal Year 1954, File 20-2.3 AA 1954, CMH, p. 3.

In September 1954, after the Europeans failed to adopt the EDC, Eisenhower decided once again to seek implementation of the Volunteer Freedom Corps. At his behest, NSC officials took the project out of the hands of the State Department and placed it under the direct control of the White House. Even within the President's own staff, however, there was no longer much enthusiasm for the idea. One White House staff member advised that it would be best to put the plan "in a file cabinet and cease to worry about it."⁵⁵ Several others shared this view. Yet even though the Corps itself remained on hold, the NSC approved an interim measure to expand the European labor service organization to include non-German Soviet escapees, a potential source of future enlistees for the Volunteer Freedom Corps.⁵⁶

In 1955 the White House made one last attempt to revive the plan. Robert Cutler reminded the Operations Coordinating Board that the Corps was the President's "pet project." The Board dispatched an Army general to Europe to head an evaluation of the plan's practicality. The results came as a serious disappointment to proponents of the Corps. The investigation concluded that there did not appear to be a sizable reservoir of qualified personnel to form combat units.⁵⁷

This conclusion, though disappointing to the President, was in line with reality. Most of the remaining million or so of Europe's stateless population (about 90 percent) had emigrated or been

55. Memorandum for Mr. Cutler, 3 November 1954, box 8, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-61, Special Staff File Series, DDE.

56. Implementation of Paragraph 8 of NSC 143/2, 20 August 1954, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-61, DDE.

57. Memorandum for Secretary Hoover, 31 March 1955, box 22, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1948-61, OCB Central File Series, DDE.

resettled between 1947 and 1951. No large pool of refugees was available to provide recruits for the Volunteer Freedom Corps unless the United States and its allies began encouraging large-scale defections of military-age men from Eastern Europe. Although Lodge favored this course and U.S. officials did consider various defection schemes, Eisenhower himself was increasingly concerned about the Soviet Union's likely reaction to overtly aggressive initiatives.⁵⁸ The purpose of the Corps, he had always believed, had to be seen in a positive light – as a means of enhancing collective security and turning displaced people into productive European citizens.⁵⁹

Under growing pressure, supporters of the Corps tried a different tack, arguing that a relatively small group of cadre units could be set up initially, and that these could be rapidly expanded during an

58. Letter, Lodge to Cutler, 9 February 1953, Henry Cabot Lodge II Papers, Lodge-Eisenhower Correspondence, 1950-53, P-373, Reel 26, MHS. Christian F. Ostermann argues after the failure of the East German uprising in 1953, the U.S. leadership began to have second thoughts about disrupting the solidarity of the Eastern Bloc. See Christian F. Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering": The United States and the East German Uprising of 1953," *German Studies Review* Vol. 19, No. 1 (March 1996), pp. 61-89. See also Valur Ingimundarson, "The Eisenhower Administration, the Adenauer Government, and the Political Uses of the East German Uprising in 1953," *Diplomatic History* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer 1996), p. 409; Jim Marchio, "Resistance Potential and Rollback: US Intelligence and the Eisenhower Administration's Policies Toward Eastern Europe, 1953-1956," *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1995), pp. 219-241; Beatrice Heuser, "Subversive Operationen in Dienste der 'Rollback'-Politik, 1948-1953," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* No. 4 (April 1989), pp. 279-98. H. W. Brands suggests that President Eisenhower lost interest in the Corps after the failed Hungarian Revolution of 1956 convinced the president that rolling back Soviet power in the Eastern bloc was impractical. See Brands, "A Cold War Foreign Legion?" p. 9.

59. In fact, the United States had a contingency plan in case news of the proposal was leaked prematurely. The primary concern was that the Soviet Union would portray the Corps as a foreign legion or liberation army and a threat to East European security. If the proposal were disclosed, the United States was supposed to emphasize that the purpose of the Corps was to defend the West, not undermine the Eastern Bloc. See Psychological Strategy Board, Contingency Guidance During Preparatory Phase of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 19 June 1953, box 8, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, papers, 1948-61, OCB Secretariat Series, DDE.

emergency. Lodge asked Secretary Dulles whether the revised concept could be added to the NSC's agenda. This new approach won a brief respite for the corps. General Alfred M. Gruenther, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, expressed his approval of a pilot program. For a time, Eisenhower even considered asking Spain to host future units of the Corps.⁶⁰

Heartened by this turn of events, proponents of the Corps stepped up their lobbying. C.D. Jackson pointedly raised the matter with Dillon Anderson, a Presidential Special Assistant: "We have had Paris, London, Bermuda, Berlin, Badnung, Geneva [Conferences] and Adenauer is about to go to Moscow. Isn't it about time that we stopped using the next Conference as an excuse for doing nothing? The time for the VFC is now."⁶¹ Jackson claimed that interest in the initiative had diminished solely because the Defense and State Departments' lacked imagination and were "lukewarm" in their support.⁶²

60. See letter, Dulles to Lodge, 7 July 1955, box 2, John Foster Dulles Papers, 1952-59, General Correspondence and Memoranda series, DDE. For a summary of NSC staff actions on the Corps for the years 1955-56 see, agenda (VFC folder), box 8, White House Office, National Security Council Staff, Papers, 1948-61, OCB Secretariat Series, DDE. The ultimate fate of the cadre proposal is unclear. Some Volunteer Freedom Corps records are still classified. The United States may have set up a covert military body within the European labor force.

61. Letter, Jackson to Anderson, 8 August 1955, box 110, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE. See also letter, Jackson to Anderson 19 April, 1955, box 110, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE; excerpt from proposal dated 16 February 1955 written to Allen Dulles and Nelson Rockefeller, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE; letter, Jackson to Cutler, 5 October 1954, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE; letter, Lodge to Anderson, 25 April 1955, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE; letter, Lodge to Anderson, 13 April 1955, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE; letter, Lodge to Smith, 19 April 1955, box 22, White House Office, National Security Council Staff Papers, 1948-61, OCB Central File Series, DDE; letter, Lodge to Anderson, 25 April 1955, box 19, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Briefing Notes Subseries, DDE.

Despite Jackson's arguments, the real reason the idea had languished was quite simple. As a State Department memorandum explained in 1955, whenever "feelers" about the Corps had been sent out to the West European governments, the response was almost uniformly negative, not least in the countries in which the Corps was supposed to be located. West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer said he favored the idea when he spoke about it in Bonn with Congressman Kersten in 1954, but he soon backed away from that position. In a follow-up meeting with the U.S. High Commissioner in Germany, John McCloy, Adenauer said that he needed to "consider the matter more thoroughly." In reality, as the State Department memorandum pointed out, the United States was never able to get a firm commitment from Adenauer, if only because the program would have sparked intense objections from the opposition Social Democratic Party. Even though Adenauer occasionally feigned interest in the idea to please his American interlocutors, domestic concerns about armed stateless groups in the heart of Europe precluded any chance that Germany would accept the plan. The memorandum concluded that in light of the "overriding importance of the European defense problem and the sensitivity of European public opinion," the proposal for a Corps should be deferred indefinitely.⁶³ That is precisely what happened. Despite Eisenhower's enthusiasm and support, the proposal was put on hold for the

62. Memorandum from Walter A. Radius, Department of State, subject: Activation of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 28 October 1954, box 22, White House, National Security Council Staff Papers, DDE. For more on the role of West German domestic politics, see Thomas Alan Schwartz, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 140-153, and Daniel F. Rogers, *Politics after Hitler: the Western Allies and the German Party System* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

next five years. It was cancelled altogether in 1960 after the NSC acknowledged that favorable conditions for implementing the proposal were unlikely to materialize.⁶⁴

The Corps and the Cold War

The ill-fated history of Eisenhower's proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps says a great deal about the forces that shaped U.S. Cold War strategy. Lodge had vigorously promoted the idea of a Corps for seven years during the Truman administration, but he failed to gain wholehearted support from any of the relevant actors: the President, the Congress, the armed services, and the State Department. The advent of the Eisenhower administration presented new opportunities. With Eisenhower's backing and with greater reliance on the NSC, Lodge's proposal was pushed through over the objections of the national security establishment and was nearly implemented. Lodge, C.D. Jackson, and other officials who spearheaded the program focused on the purported benefits of the Corps for U.S. national interests, while ignoring (or at least downplaying) the cultural and national complexities and risks.

Even when it became clear that the concerns of the West European governments would be an insurmountable obstacle, U.S. officials were reluctant to abandon the idea. Eisenhower demurred not

63. Progress Report on NSC 143/2 Activation of the Volunteer Freedom Corps, 3 August 1955, box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE, p. 1-2; Report to the National Security Council on the Activation of a Volunteer Freedom Corps, 14 June 1955 box 4, White Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, DDE. While the Volunteer Freedom Corps was on hold, William Gill set about trying to organize a nongovernmental version of the corps called Volunteers for Freedom. See various correspondence in folder, "Volunteers for Freedom", box 110, C.D. Jackson Papers, DDE.

because he recognized the program's shortfalls, but because European opposition threatened to spill over, putting at risk approval for his other security initiatives. The President never really lost his enthusiasm for the proposed Corps and kept the idea alive until almost the very end of his two terms in office.

Because the Volunteer Freedom Corps failed to reconcile the interests of sovereign European states and their stateless residents, it was an ill-considered notion. Yet policymakers toyed with the idea for more than a decade. The proposal always appeared to have some merit for those who favored state-centered approaches to security issues. The problem, however, was that state-oriented solutions glossed over the complicated role of ethnic and national identities in the early postwar European order. By supporting the Volunteer Freedom Corps initiative, U.S. leaders overestimated their ability to project a unifying vision for Europe's complicated and fragmented political mosaic. The tension between the interests of the American state and the imperatives of European cultural, ethnic, and national identities was not unique to the proposal for a Volunteer Freedom Corps. It was a natural byproduct of the manner in which the United States developed and implemented national security programs. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, this approach had become engrained in the U.S. policymaking process. The strain between U.S. objectives and European culture proved to be an enduring feature of U.S. relations with the other NATO countries, a feature that persists to this day.

