

Getting Along with Russia

AS THE GREATEST of wars fades out in a rumble of tanks across the Manchurian plains, man's thoughts revolve around the question of whether it will ever happen again. Among the articulate and the molders of opinion, two main points of view seem to hold the center of the stage. One is that, with the development of atom bombs and rockets to carry them unpiloted to the ends of the earth, another war is simply unthinkable, and therefore it will not occur. The other is that with the emergence of two great powers preëminent over all others in the world, representing social systems diametrically opposed, war between them—between the USA and the USSR—is inevitable.

The lessons of all past history seem to argue against both these black-and-white conclusions—one as blindly optimistic as that to which most of us succumbed after the last war, the other cynical and pessimistic in the extreme. Each new advance in the harnessing of nature has been turned to whatever purpose is man's main business at the moment: be it peace or war. The most powerful aggressor in this war, Germany, was led by men who were completely indifferent to human life. Witness the ten million willfully murdered in gas chambers or by planned starvation within or beyond the walls of concentration camps. There is no question but that any future would-be-aggressor state would equally set world domination as its goal. It would therefore also put all moral scruples behind it. So another war is not unthinkable.

But neither is it inevitable. Those who assume that the Soviet Union and America must fight either because of the power drives that are supposed to be inherent in all great states, or because of their opposing social systems, ignore history. (They also ignore so potent a factor as the will of the peoples, but that we will leave aside for a moment.) During the entire 170 years of existence of this republic, we and Russia have *always* had opposing social systems. Until the Bolsheviks came to power there in 1917, ours was, beyond all argument, the most radical state in the world, in its virtually complete break with feudalism. Among the great powers, the Russian Empire was the most autocratic, feudal and backward. Americans made no secret of their abhorrence of Russia's exile system and its medieval pogroms against the Jews. The Tsars were equally repelled by the audacity of our democracy.

Yet Tsarist Russia and the budding American Republic never waged war. More, *Russia, Tsarist or Soviet, is the only great power with which the United States, or the colonies out of which they grew, has never been at war.* In colonial days, we warred with France over the vital issue of the expansion of the

frontier. Britain we fought for our freedom, and again, in 1812, to maintain it. In the last half century we have warred with Spain, Italy, Japan, Turkey and twice with Germany, Austria-Hungary and its successor states. If one adds the conflict a century ago with Mexico, and again in 1914; the hostilities in two wars with Bulgaria; the suppression of the Boxer rebellion in China and the maintenance of some forces there ever since, the picture becomes even more impressive. We have been in armed conflict with governments or peoples in every corner of the globe, *except Russia.* More to the point, *our national interests, real or fancied, have required the sanction of arms vis-à-vis all these states, but never against Russia.*

But, one hears voices in interruption, what about our intervention in Russia in 1918? Closely examined, that incident is literally the exception which proves the rule. Our forces landed in two places, Archangel and Vladivostok. In the latter case, even according to recent Russian sources and the personal acknowledgment of Litvinov, our action was directed mainly toward curbing the Japanese, who were then our allies, and who put ashore seven times as many men as we. In the long run, thanks largely to our democratically minded commander on the spot, General William S. Graves, we succeeded in our objective, with a minimum of interference in the affairs of the Russians.

The small force we landed at Archangel represented in fact that "ideological war" of which one hears so much today. Yet even here our national interests, which were not in conflict with those of Russia, overrode the political desire to prevent an experiment in revolutionary socialism from taking place in that country. We were the most powerful and the freshest of the Allied forces in the First World War, having suffered negligible casualties. Yet we sent the smallest force of intervention and played the least important role in organizing, financing and equipping the anti-Soviet armies. Every one of our Allies *and enemies* in Europe, and Japan and Turkey in Asia, took a more active part in that war of intervention than we.

There are those who contend that our relative passivity in the war of intervention was due to our distance from the scene. Although that is only partly true, it demonstrates again that our *national interests* were not in conflict. This is borne out also by our policy toward Russia's territorial holdings. We were the last to recognize the independence of the Baltic states and we never recognized Rumania's seizure of Bessarabia. Our European allies in that war felt that their national interests, as well as their hatred of Bolshevism, dictated the weakening of Russia, as distinct from its government. We were moved by no such considera-

tions and had always benefited by the existence of a strong Russia to counterbalance our early enemy in Europe, England, and more recently Germany.

There was a final factor accounting for the weakness of our intervention in 1918 which is of the greatest importance for today. It is that Russia, which had never been our enemy, had fought for three bloody years on the side we finally joined. To the very degree that our consciences were troubled by having an autocracy as ally in a war "to save the world for democracy," we rejoiced at the overthrow of the Tsar. Despite governmental abhorrence of the later—Bolshevik—revolution, public opinion, particularly among labor, was strongly pro-Russian. It is a fact worth pondering that the first general strike in our history took place in the 100-percent American city of Seattle in 1919 for the *political* purpose of preventing the shipping of supplies to Vladivostok for use against the Soviet government!

This brings us to the present day. We alone among the powers have *no* tradition of war against Russia and therefore no mass chauvinism against them as a people. The reverse is equally true. Russia, which never fought us, has fought Germany and every state east of it during the past 700 years, France and England in the past century, Italy and Japan in the present.

We *have* a tradition of alliance with the Russians in the two greatest wars in history, and of close friendship and amicable solution of problems prior to that. Catherine the Great was desirous of maintaining trade with us during the Revolutionary War, despite British opposition. Toward that end, she established the principle of armed neutrality on the high seas which has been so important a part of our policy ever since. Yet Catherine was vocal in her objections to our republicanism. Prior to the Civil War, differences pertaining to the boundaries of Russian Alaska were settled over the conference table. (The Russians had had outposts as far south as California.) During the Civil War, the appearance of Russian fleets on good-will missions in the ports of New York and San Francisco was one of the factors which pushed Britain back from the verge of intervention on the side of the South. Yet Lincoln's democracy and Alexander's monarchy were poles apart. Afterward, we bought Alaska on terms which were mutually satisfactory.

Thus, the lessons of history: *completely opposing social systems have never brought Russia and America into conflict, while the coincidence of national interests has been so marked as to make us friends for 170 years, and allies in the two greatest wars either nation has ever fought.*

What of today? A recapitulation of the fears with regard to Russian policy expressed by the American press during the war years is some measure of the lack of importance of the alarms being sounded today. Moscow did not ally itself with Hitler to conquer the

world, or with Hirohito to carve up Asia. It did not stop fighting when its own territory had been freed, and preserve Hitler as a buffer against the Western world. It did not incorporate into the Soviet Union the territories occupied by its troops in their pursuit of the Wehrmacht. It did not encourage Togliatti, Thorez, Rakosi, Pieck, Fischer, Dimitrov, Pauker and Gottwald to set up Soviets in liberated Europe, nor have they tried to do so. It did not sit mourning its 10,000,000 military and civilian war dead, leaving to us the bloody job of invading the Japanese mainland. Instead it engaged Japan in the largest scale fighting of the entire Pacific War. According to General Claire Chennault and Lord Louis Mountbatten its entry, rather than the atom bomb, was the decisive factor in bringing about the surrender at this time.

Finally, Moscow's relations with China have been so correct, even to the signing of the alliance with the emissaries of the recognized government at Chungking, that the Communist radio at Yen-an had to declare that North China will not necessarily consider itself bound by treaties to which it was not a party. Although the text of the Sino-Soviet treaty has not been published at this writing, nor have the "agreements" on other "matters of mutual interest" which were discussed, it is a certainty that Moscow will favor an anti-fascist coalition government. That this will not take the form of undue interference in Chinese affairs is indicated by the steps obviously being taken on their own initiative both by Chungking and Yen-an to improve their bargaining positions at the expense of the defeated Japanese. By the time this article reaches the reader Soviet or Mongolian troops will be in direct contact with the Chinese Communist forces at least, and the policies they then pursue will make the picture much clearer.

Perhaps the potentialities for postwar coöperation between ourselves and the USSR have been best demonstrated by the solution of the question of the disposition of Germany and Japan. What insuperable difficulties were supposed to have stood in the way of the delineation of occupation zones, the punishment of war criminals, the distribution of reparations and the determination of the political future of Germany! Yet Potsdam brought compromise agreements on all these issues. Thus it was demonstrated that getting along with Stalin was not a personal quality of President Roosevelt, but a reflection of the national interest of the American and British peoples and the demand for coöperation with Russia voiced at the last elections in both countries. Churchill's bitter speech on August 16 only emphasizes this. Likewise, Soviet agreement to the distasteful retention of the Japanese Emperor, and the appointment of a single, American, commander-in-chief for Japan indicates a willingness to recognize the facts of life in the Pacific.

To this observer, the course of this war has demonstrated the ability of the USA and the USSR to get along on one ideological issue, but leaves another open. The one on which we have agreed is that fascism is a common enemy, dangerous both to the democratic-capitalist and the soviet-socialist ways of life. The one which remains open in practice (although in words it was settled at Teheran and Yalta), is whether we can agree to permit peoples freedom of choice between our two systems. At present that is not an issue. Both eastern and western Europe, including Britain, are moving, at various rates of speed, toward a system in which large landholdings are abolished, but distributed among the peasantry, large industry is nationalized, but small industry, private commerce and individual farming are not interfered with.

The countries of western Europe have not advanced very far toward that goal. This is largely due to de Gaulle's conservatism, Allied control over Italy, and Tory pressure in the Low Countries, and the unwillingness of the former resistance movements to counter these pressures by other than lawful means. In eastern Europe no attempt has been made to move beyond the system described above, nor can there be such an attempt for a decade or more. However, when industry has recovered and expanded, and the peasantry finds that individual land ownership and the abolition of feudalism do not automatically bring an end to all its troubles, there must be further changes. That new "European system" is neither capitalism as we know it, nor socialism as it exists in the Soviet Union. But anyone who has followed the history of the USSR knows that such a system can mark a transition toward socialism. It is a certainty that the Communist parties will try to persuade the people to move in that direction.

Suppose, out of a combination of the lessons of their own experience and admiration for the progress which everyone agrees Russia will make in the next decade, they turn in its direction, however gradually and peacefully? Will we permit it? Suppose, 20 years hence, the USSR attains an American standard of living and bids fair to go beyond it? Suppose, at the same time, we have not learned to cope with the distribution of the goods our system can produce, and we are in a chronic economic crisis? This is by no means inevitable, but it is very highly possible.

Under those circumstances there is a certainty that would-be American Hitlers would seek a solution of our problems, and, prior to that, the maintenance of our position *vis-à-vis* the encroachment of a growing socialist world, in war with the USSR. Those considerations have been for years the motive force in the thinking of the Hearsts, the Pattersons and McCormicks, and of so dangerous an advisor for evil as Herbert Hoover. The question then, as now, is whether the

American people will grant every other people the right to determine its own destiny as it sees fit. Our history in general, the course of our relations with Russia in particular, and the fact that the American people in crisis has always solved its own problems and has not tried to pass the buck in the form of aggressive war, would tend to answer that question in the positive. But there is no question that the American counterpart of the monopolist, imperialist interests which brought Europe to catastrophe will attempt to answer it differently. The choice is up to us.

As for Russia, I for one can see no danger of aggressive war on her part under her present system. She has all the raw materials she needs, and is willing to sell us whatever we need in exchange for our machinery. Her system of raising purchasing power in proportion to production provides a boundless internal market. Sales abroad are made only for the purpose of paying for goods which must be purchased in order to fulfill the internal plan of production. Therefore there is no imperative drive for foreign markets. Her system creates no surplus capital incapable of profitable investment at home, and which must seek markets abroad. For all these reasons, she needs no colonies or spheres of influence except for reasons of strategic security.

It is not conceivable to me that the question of security outposts will be a cause of war when such major questions as the frontiers of Soviet occupation in Europe and Asia have been settled peacefully. Undoubtedly, there will be haggling over the Dardanelles, the Kiel Canal, perhaps the Kurile Islands, but these are petty by comparison to the issues already settled. So long as her economy continues to expand, as it undoubtedly will for decades to come, Russia grows stronger merely by sitting still. Therefore territorial expansion is not necessary.

The history of American-Soviet relations is a good portent for the future. We have been allies, and never enemies, despite differing social systems. We have a joint task in preventing the renewal of German and Japanese aggression, which should maintain our alliance. That is the declared main theme of Soviet foreign policy for the years ahead. Russia needs peace to rebuild and prosper. We need it because the ability to find great markets abroad, which is fundamental to our system, depends on the assurance that the long-term loans and credits we will have to extend to all the world will be paid back. And only a stable world can guarantee that. Within our country, the threat to peace comes from those whose economic policies and appeasement helped bring about this war. Their freedom of action has been increasingly restricted by the last four presidential elections. They must now be completely deprived of the power to "drift us," or force us, into war again.

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