

Chapter IV

TEHERAN AND YALTA: GUIDE TO PEACE AS WELL AS VICTORY

THE GRAND STRATEGY OF WAR VICTORY AND A DURABLE peace was worked out by the personal meetings of Roosevelt and Stalin in Teheran and Yalta with Churchill as a reluctant third party. There was a prologue in the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers and an epilogue in the Potsdam Big Three meeting where Attlee replaced Churchill and Truman replaced Roosevelt. The meeting in Teheran was the great turning point of the war. It was there that Roosevelt and Stalin finally joined hands to reject the Churchill strategy and to establish the supremacy of the Soviet-American plans.

The chief Teheran decisions were: opening of the Second Front through France by the middle of 1944, under American supreme command; encouragement and arming of the liberation movements in the Nazi-occupied countries; creation of interim governments for the countries to be liberated on the basis of the groups and parties actually uniting to fight the Germans, and not the discredited emigration in London with its "governments-in-exile"; the project for the United Nations, and the promise that victory would result in a durable peace for some generations. These were the characteristic features

of the Soviet-American strategy that dominated the war from Teheran onward to Potsdam.

At last the Allied coalition was fighting one war, the essential condition for the destruction of the Axis and real victory.

It is rather important today that all Americans should begin to understand the Teheran decisions and the consequences that flowed from them; for they were vital not only for the war but also for making peace. It is because these decisions have been forgotten or abandoned that peacemaking is being so badly bungled.

Implicit in the Teheran concord was, above all, the closing of books on the old ambition of the western powers to overthrow the Soviet government and restore capitalism in the territory of the former Czarist Empire. The Soviet Union was accepted as a Great Power, the equal in all respects of its Allies.

This was not a "concession" made to the Soviet Union by Britain and America. It was simply recognition of and accommodation to an existing situation.

It was not merely a verbal agreement which could be conveniently forgotten when the war was over.

The Teheran strategy was based upon the new relation of power and further strengthened that relationship. The Soviet Union's emergence as a Great Power, and the Teheran agreement, further strengthened its position and at the same time strengthened that of America. The permanence and equality of the Soviet Union in the family of nations are guaranteed by its own strength. No nation or combination of nations can successfully challenge it. That is the result of victory

in the war and of the way that victory was won. It cannot be canceled out by talk or disputation. It can be challenged only by arms, and then with very slight prospects of success. Its recognition is the beginning of wisdom and a durable peace. It is an accomplished fact.

In a book written in 1942, I based an optimistic forecast of the war's course upon a prediction of the Teheran decisions. Replying to the cynics who said that real co-operation among the Allies was impossible, I wrote:

True it is that the policy for United Nations' victory in this war is being forged by the fearful hammer of war upon the anvil of necessity, and is not the product of ideology. But this is no reason to doubt the sincerity or validity of the policy, but quite the contrary, it is the deepest guarantee. I can take these statements of policy as valid, without reservation, because I find their guarantee not in the hearts of statesmen with all their reservations, but in the iron and brutal necessities of national survival—and in the hearts of the masses of the people who make up the nation and who believe in these policies without reservation. [*Victory—and After*, 1942, p. 36]

And in 1944, I wrote:

It is one of the elementary facts of life, which no ideology can modify and no other factors can fundamentally change, that the character of the postwar world will be largely influenced by those who win the war on the battlefield. [*Teheran*, 1944, p. 18]

America found victory and freedom through recognition at Teheran of the exigencies of the war. She will

find a durable peace only through maintaining the same realistic approach.

In order to win the war it was necessary to adopt a common strategy with the Soviet Union, which combined our common national interests. That is the essence of the Teheran concord.

Now that we have come to the making of peace we will find it necessary to follow the same course *or there will be no peace.*

We cannot base the peace on a foundation different from that on which we fought the war. The peace must combine the vital interests of both America and the Soviet Union. When Mr. Byrnes finally accepts this as the guiding line, most of the difficulties in making peace will begin to dissolve. We cannot shelve the Churchill strategy during the war, and then return to it for making the peace. That is not only morally wrong, a breach of faith—it is also impractical, it will not work.

This book is written in September, 1946, for publication in the spring of 1947. We may hope that in the intervening period Mr. Byrnes may have found his way out of the blind alley into which he has led American diplomacy and returned to Roosevelt's policies. Unfortunately, as this is written, such a pleasing prospect seems very unlikely, and there is no way to avoid the sharpest disagreement with Mr. Byrnes.

If America had desired a peace conference which would unquestioningly accept such proposals as Mr. Byrnes has made, it would have been necessary to fight and win the war in quite a different fashion. It would have been necessary to adopt Churchill's line, and not

that of the Teheran Conference. Peace is shaped on the battlefields; these are determined by the grand strategy adopted by the leaders. We chose a definite kind of peace by the Teheran decisions—the kind of peace Byrnes is now refusing to make in the current peace negotiations.

These basic truths gain further emphasis when one turns to the decisions of the Yalta Conference which carried further the implications of Teheran. Yalta took place when victory was already in sight. Its central task was agreement on the lines of occupation of Germany and her satellites. It was necessary to fix the line, in advance, at which the Anglo-American Armies would meet the Soviet Red Armies, a decision which would set approximately the zones of occupation. That line was established along the Elbe River.

Now it is a fact, whether one likes it or not, that when the Big Three at Yalta fixed the occupation lines in Germany, they also by that act made it impossible that an Anglo-American combination could dictate the main terms of peace to the Russians.

The Elbe line predetermined that the peace settlement must be satisfactory to the Soviet Union because it placed in Soviet hands the practical power of veto over any settlement they considered hostile to their interests.

If America wanted to insist upon a particular form of the peace which we knew the Soviet Union would not accept, then we should have made different decisions in Teheran and Yalta, we should have fought the war in a different way, and especially we should not have agreed

to the Elbe line. It would have been stupid and harmful to fight the war along Churchill's lines, but that would have been the only logical way to prepare for a Churchillian peace.

If America really wanted a peace dictated by us and Britain, overruling the Soviet Union on the questions it considers most important, then we should have insisted that the Red Armies stop at the Soviet borders and that they should not proceed into Germany up to the Elbe River. We should have demanded the right to defeat the German armies thereafter with our own forces alone. We didn't do that. Indeed, if my memory has not failed me, America expressed a great uneasiness that perhaps the Red Armies *would* stop at the Soviet borders and we insisted that they should go on into Germany and finish the main military job they had so well begun. Therefore the Elbe line, and therefore the present deadlock, in which America is trying to make a different peace from that which we prepared in the conduct of the war.

The Potsdam Conference came after the Nazis had collapsed and Roosevelt was no longer with us. Relations within the Big Three were not as smooth as at Teheran and Yalta. Already signs were accumulating that America looked at questions differently as soon as the fighting was finished. President Truman was, however, on the whole guided by Roosevelt's previous specific commitments and honored them, even though he displayed no initiative in extending the Roosevelt line. Consequently Potsdam was not a break with the Roosevelt policy. But it was the last meeting of the Allies

which did not wind up in bickering, open quarrels, deadlocks, and general worsening of relations. After Potsdam, American representatives took a new line in dealing with the Soviet Union—or rather they returned to the Churchill line. This was called “the end of appeasement,” or “getting tough with Russia.”

Byrnes's course of “getting tough with Russia” is justified by his supporters on the grounds that he is only making a necessary “correction” of Roosevelt, who had unnecessarily “sacrificed American interests.” It would be the part of wisdom, however, to ponder the question long, deeply, and in great detail before reaching any such conclusion. For it will be a very expensive judgment. There is a wise old saying that “He who pays the fiddler calls the tune.” Americans often misunderstand that to mean, since we are a prosperous nation, we can call any tune our caprice may suggest. To guard against such vulgar misunderstanding the axiom should be slightly reworded to gain a different emphasis: “He who calls the tune must pay the fiddler.” If America calls the tune of casting aside the Roosevelt policies toward Russia, then we will be paying the fiddler for generations.

The first installment that America will be called upon to pay the fiddler of history if we call the anti-Soviet tune consists of the rapid breakdown of all those good things we like to associate with the phrase, “The American way of life.” We will have to go militarist in a big way, undertake to police the world, and gather as allies all those reactionary forces that formerly gravitated naturally to Hitler—in sum, the price will add up to an

American fascism. Roosevelt saw truly and clearly that Soviet-American friendship and co-operation laid the foundation for any program of conserving the American way of life, not only in the war but also, and especially, in making a durable peace.

To appreciate the wisdom of Roosevelt's leadership, one needs to imagine what would have resulted if we had followed Churchill instead, as we are now beginning to do.

Imagine for a moment that, at Teheran, Roosevelt had adopted Churchill's strategy and had imposed it upon Stalin. Even if we discount all the disasters inherent in such a course and give it credit for all conceivable successes, this would inevitably have brought certain results, including:

- (1) Prolongation of the war, multiplication of its costs in money and lives;
- (2) Occupation of Europe by American armies of several million men for an indefinite period; and/or
- (3) The spread of civil wars and revolutions through Europe on a vast scale; and finally
- (4) The inevitable climax of a Third World War within a few years.

Roosevelt's policy saved us from the first two of these catastrophic consequences. If continued, that policy can save us from the other two.

In choosing allies it is an elementary consideration that one should give preference to a strong one. But, now that the war is over, America seems to have forgotten this little *a-b-c* item. We have plumped on Britain as our chief ally and even leader, although her weak-

ness is obvious and notorious, and chosen to antagonize the Soviet Union whose strength is as obvious as British weakness.

Or, perhaps, does America think the Soviet Union is not strong but weak? Is our action in scrapping Roosevelt's policy based on a new judgment or on new evidence showing that weakness of the Soviet Union makes her unimportant as a friend?

It is an astounding example of the power of propaganda and wishful thinking, but it is a fact that many influential Americans today have their judgment on high policy influenced, and deeply, by the revived myth of Soviet weakness. They have forgotten the lesson of 1941, when our experts were unanimous in saying that Hitler would conquer the Soviet Union in three weeks to six months!

Recently I had a long talk with a man whose advice is listened to in the highest circles in Washington. I asked him why Mr. Byrnes was permitted to place America in flat opposition to almost everything the Soviet Union considers essential for a stable peace and whether it was not possible that in some things Soviet leaders might know Europe even a little better than the gentleman from South Carolina? His reply was a frightening, but candid, glimpse into the thinking processes of some high American officials.

Mr. X., as I will call him, said gravely that it would be a big mistake to deal with the Soviet Union now in the same fashion that Roosevelt did during the war. At that time, he said, it was quite correct to "coddle" the Soviets, to make sure they would continue fighting,

lick the Germans, and then help finish the Japs. But as soon as victory was in sight, the necessity for being friendly to the Soviets was ended. Now, he continued, the Soviets want to gather too many fruits from our victory. We have to call a halt to that. They pretend to be very strong. But we know that is not true. We have confidential reports showing that the Soviet government is very weak. Its troops returning from Europe are very discontented. They have seen a higher standard of living than their own and they are turning against their government and its system. The Russian people are disgusted with their leaders because they could not prevent the Germans from laying waste their country. They are hoping for a lead and help from America to establish something like the American system. Soon there will be great revolts and upheavals in Russia and the Soviets will be overthrown—especially if America stops helping them and, instead, gives them plenty of headaches in their international affairs. Mr. X. finished his explanation with the opinion that Mr. Byrnes is, by and large, doing a good job of it, although sometimes he is too timid—until Senator Vandenberg stiffens up his backbone!

Most appalling feature of this “inside report” on the thinking that goes on in American official circles is that there are American “statesmen” who believe such wild fables and formulate policy on that basis.

Such men have only the haziest idea of the extremely explosive revolutionary situation in Europe and the world. To the extent they are conscious of it they attribute it to “bolshevik agitation.” If one should ex-

plain to them that the Russian “bolsheviks” are today the most stabilizing factor in Europe, they would only stare at you and tell themselves “the man is crazy.” They are just as sure that “Stalin will soon be overthrown” as was Wilson in 1918 that “Lenin and the Bolsheviks cannot last six months.” They are pathetically eager to do each his own little bit in “cleaning up Europe from the Communists.”

Of such raw materials the “statesmen” in Washington are fashioning American foreign policy in these times.

It is of little use to examine the immorality of this current American attitude to foreign affairs or its politically reactionary character, until we have settled accounts first with its failure to see the real world.

Byrnes’s policy is wrong, first of all, because it is based upon the illusion that the Soviet Union is weak. He thinks that if he sounds his trumpet long enough and loud enough the Soviet walls will come a-tumblin’ down like those of Jericho.

Anyone who acts upon the judgment that the Soviet Union is weak is thereby doomed to proceed from one mistake to another until he lands in bankruptcy. I said “anyone.” That goes for the blunderers of our State Department. It goes equally for some “profound Marxists” (God save the mark!) who interpret the eagerness of Soviet leaders to cultivate every opportunity for peace as being caused by weakness!

The Soviet government is the most stable in the world and in history. That is a hard fact. Americans should not have to test it with arms in order to learn the fact.

Let us remind ourselves of a few items of incontrovertible evidence, available to all, that demonstrate the stability of the Soviet Union and its government:

The Soviet Union met and destroyed at least four-fifths of the Nazi war machine based on the combined resources of Europe. In addition it smashed the largest part of the Japanese land forces. British and American combined resources were strained to deal with the remaining fifth of the Nazis, and with Japan on the water and in the South Pacific Islands.

The Soviet Union suffered the greatest losses of life and property of any nation; but unlike all others ravaged by the Axis never had any widespread defeatist, Vichyite, or quisling movements among its people.

The Soviet Union, faced with the combined resources of Europe, losing in the first stages of the war much of its own industrially developed regions, was still able to reconstruct its war industries out of reach of the enemy, in the Urals, and to furnish more than ninety per cent (at least) of her own war materials. Lend-lease aid from America, important as it was, came late, was only a fraction of Soviet requirements and was less than three per cent of America's own war expenditures.

The Soviet Union had, in its less than twenty-four years before the Nazi invasion, transformed a wrecked and backward country into a modern industrial land, first in Europe in production and technique and second in the world only to the United States.

The Soviet Union, since the war ended, has made the most decisive measurable progress of any devastated country in restoration and reconstruction of its econ-

omy. It is the only country which was invaded in which wartime inflation is being visibly mastered.

The Soviet Union has a leadership which, by testimony of friend and foe alike, is unique in always knowing what it wants and in always accurately distinguishing friend from foe.

Can any country or government of which such things must be said be considered in any sense weak?

Is it not clear that no other existing government could have survived such tests of war?

Is it not clear, and more than clear, that the Soviet government which survived world hostility and invasions when still young and weak, and which now has survived the greatest war in history, in which she had to meet and repel the main blows of the enemy, has proved that she is truly unconquerable?

America was fortunate and happy to have the Soviet Union by her side as an ally in the war.

Is it not the part of wisdom so to conduct American affairs in the postwar world as to preserve that friendly relationship?

As one American I want to go on record as sharing Roosevelt's conviction that such a course represents American national interest, that it is a practical policy, and that thereby a durable peace becomes possible.