

## Chapter VI

### HOW AMERICA ABANDONED ROOSEVELT'S POLICY

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THE EARTH WAS STILL FRESH ON ROOSEVELT'S GRAVE when our American government began to move away from his central policy of finding the road to co-operation with the Soviet Union in war and peace. The scene of the birth of the United Nations organization at San Francisco, which realized one of Roosevelt's great aims, also witnessed a great defeat for the Roosevelt course: the rebirth of anti-Sovietism as a decisive factor shaping American policy.

It is of more than ordinary importance that Americans study deeply the events that opened the rift between our government and that of our Soviet ally even before the war was over. That rift has been widening steadily ever since. It has become the dominant factor in world affairs. Overcoming it is the key to securing a stable peace. We cannot afford to slide along the easy way on the assumption that our government is always right, but that right or wrong, our government must have our support. The hard fact is that America initiated the rift with the Soviet Union. And the rift was opened on issues about which the Soviet position was correct and also in American interests, and on which the American position was wrong and harmful to ourselves. The only patriotic course for a responsible American citizen

is to try to correct our own position, not to call upon the Soviet Union to accede to our mistakes.

The issues upon which America publicly initiated conflict with the Soviet Union in the San Francisco Conference were concentrated in the questions of (1) the seating of the fascist Argentinian government's delegates; (2) the principle of equality of the great powers, or the question of the veto; and (3) the principle of the ultimate independence of the subject peoples as a goal of the United Nations, or the question of the colonial system.

On all these questions America, under Roosevelt's leadership, had taken a definite and open position. The Soviet delegation in San Francisco stood upon the Roosevelt position, while the American delegation abandoned it, took up the Churchill policy, and used its influence to mobilize a majority vote against its own previous policy and its Soviet defenders.

Soviet leaders would have been completely justified in considering such a move as evidence of bad faith, a violation of previous commitments, not even justified as being in protection of any definable American interest, and therefore revealing as its only possible motive a deep hostility to the Soviet Union. That they did not immediately draw such conclusions is testimony to their patience and their understanding of the contradictions inherent in the peculiar American form of democratic government. They assumed that these hostile actions were the result of confusion and misunderstanding, and labored patiently and flexibly to clear them up. At San Francisco the issues were patched up sufficiently to

move ahead with the United Nations. It would be more pleasant to forget the whole controversy. But because events since San Francisco have ever more closely followed the pattern set there, of sharp cleavage without adequate motivation, we cannot afford to forget how this rift was begun by America.

Let us review the Argentine issue. On June 29, 1944, Secretary of State Cordell Hull issued a public statement denouncing the Peron regime in Argentina as fascist in character and engaged in aiding the Axis in the war. On February 12, 1946, our State Department (at that time under Secretary of State Byrnes) issued a lengthy "Blue Book" documenting that charge with a broad array of facts. In between these two dates, however, at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, the U.S. delegation proposed that this same Peron regime be invited to send its delegation to participate in founding the United Nations organization. The Soviet delegation opposed this proposal, and asked for a few days' delay to acquaint themselves with the new facts which doubtless the American delegates must have had to show that Argentina was no longer linked with the Axis enemy. The American delegation refused to agree to any delay. They had no evidence that the Peron regime had ceased to be a Hitler agency. On the contrary they were then in possession of the damaging evidence published nine months later. But they gave no answer to the question or motivation for their proposal. For them it was sufficient that the American delegation, motive unknown, proposed the seating of Argentina in the United Nations. They rushed the question to a vote and defeated the

plea for delay and investigation made by the Soviet Union.

I have searched the literature on this question and have been unable to find a single responsible person or publication which has defended with any reasoned argument or statement of policy the American action in forcing fascist Argentina into the United Nations over Russia's objections. It is obviously indefensible. And then after America had forced the Soviet Union into relations with Argentina, some Americans have the effrontery to accuse her of some sort of moral offense when she sends a delegation to that country for business relations.

The seating of Argentina did not have even the dubious merit of furthering some very special American interest. It was the largest single factor enabling Peron to control the election which came in the spring of 1946, giving America practically a political black eye before the world, in addition to the moral blow we had administered to ourselves. It threw confusion into the democratic camp everywhere, but especially in Latin America. It created suspicion and doubt about American motives and intentions among progressive-minded men of all lands. It armed the friends of the Axis and disarmed the democratic friends of America. It was so obviously a violation of Roosevelt's policy that it is difficult to interpret it as stupidity; whoever was responsible for that decision must have made it precisely because it represented a break with Roosevelt's policy of unity with the Soviet Union against the whole fascist world setup. It could only have been intended as a con-

scious beginning of the dissolution of the antifascist world front, in order to replace it with an anti-Soviet world front.

The U.S. action on Argentina also involved a tricky violation of our solemn commitments on the second issue, that of equality of the great powers and the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The invitations originally sent out for the San Francisco Conference went to a list of nations approved by the inviting powers. There was not on that list any government known or suspected to be definitely linked to the Axis. Spain was excluded because of Franco's known Axis connections. Argentina was not on the list. The organizational charter previously agreed upon at Dumbarton Oaks had provided that nomination of new members required the approval of the Security Council and was therefore subject to the veto. All this clearly amounted to a moral commitment not to introduce any country into the United Nations' councils without unanimous agreement of the great powers.

But the superclever manipulators of the American delegation found a way around this commitment. After the conference had gathered, and before the United Nations' charter was formally adopted, there was an interim in which technically the veto power was not operative. What was to prevent America from lining up a majority vote in that interim to issue a special invitation to Argentina to come and take her seat in San Francisco? An American-mobilized majority was obviously possible for almost anything, when joined with the British Empire and its close associates. And so it proved. The

Soviet Union received an emphatic and bitter lesson on the critical significance of the veto power, and an illuminating lesson as to how much—and how little—moral considerations could influence the action of U.S. delegations in international councils!

In the course of the Dumbarton Oaks consultations in preparation for the United Nations' charter, the United States had taken the lead in demanding the veto power for the leading nations in the Security Council. It was generally understood that the U.S. Senate, including both its major parties, would refuse to ratify entrance into the organization by the U.S. unless this veto power was included. The Soviet Union agreed with this American position. It was always obvious that the success of the United Nations depended upon agreement and co-operation of the major Allies who together won the war. The veto power was the guarantee that such necessary agreement and co-operation would not be forgotten and abandoned.

But in San Francisco, when the American delegation suddenly found how "easy and simple" it was to mobilize a considerable majority vote for even the most dubious proposal, it suddenly changed its attitude toward the veto power. The veto is not important when it seems that an automatic majority is always on command. The Americans set to work to open up loopholes in the veto power. For the same reason that moved the Americans away from their original championship of the veto, the Soviet delegation supported it more firmly. A deadlock ensued.

As a consequence of this clash, President Truman

made a personal intervention in Soviet-American relations. He assured himself of the nature of the commitments Roosevelt had made on the question of the veto and sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow to negotiate a settlement of the Soviet-American deadlock in San Francisco within the limits of the Roosevelt commitments. He then instructed the American delegation in San Francisco to settle the issue in accordance with those negotiations. Only thus was the San Francisco Conference saved from a fatal deadlock.

It must therefore be said that Truman prevented America from making a clean break with the Roosevelt policies at San Francisco. But it must also be said that his action did not prevent American policy from appearing before the world as ambiguous. The Roosevelt commitments were honored reluctantly and after an unsuccessful effort to renege on them.

The third major clash between American and Soviet delegations in San Francisco cut even deeper into major issues of world policy. It concerned the proposed inclusion in the United Nations' charter of a declaration for independence of subject nations as a goal and for United Nations' intervention to achieve this goal through some sort of intermediate "trusteeship." Roosevelt was reported to have spoken of this with Stalin at Yalta and to have received his support on the question of raising it at San Francisco. Whatever the facts as to these conversations (and they are not yet matters of record), it is clear that such aims represent a basic American interest, as well as a fundamental necessity for a stable peace. It is also clear that they correspond

with the Atlantic Charter and with many official American declarations of policy. The U.S. was not technically committed to insist that such provisions be written into the charter at San Francisco, but we were morally committed to make clear to the world that we stood with the Soviet Union in desiring the earliest possible liberation of the colonial peoples. At San Francisco our American delegation abandoned that moral commitment. The pledge of independence for the subject nations was not made, nor was America's adherence to it as a goal for the future established. The Soviet Union, together with China, supported this proposal. America, Britain, and France rejected it. America lined up with the colonial powers to keep the problem outside the field of any positive consideration by the United Nations.

In a later chapter I will deal at some length with the larger implications of the issue as it concerns basic Soviet-American relationships. Here it is sufficient to record the immediate significance of the rift as a part of the whole process whereby the U.S. separated itself from its wartime partnership with the Soviet Union. In San Francisco the way was open for the U.S. to choose one of three possible positions: (1) morally and practically, in alignment with the Soviet Union, China, and other nations, to put the utmost pressure upon the colonial powers for the liberation of the subject nations, with the United Nations responsible for supervising its achievement within a certain time; (2) standing morally with the Soviet Union and other anti-imperialist nations, to make a practical compromise with Britain and other colonial powers; or (3) standing morally and practically

in defense of the colonial system and so to exclude this question from the United Nations. Basic American interests and general public declarations of policy demanded at least the second course, as a minimum. Instead our delegation at San Francisco took the third course.

This represented much more than a practical compromise with the British program. It was a surrender to Churchill. It makes sense in terms of a long-time program only as part of a general renunciation of the Roosevelt policies. It makes sense not at all in advancing America's basic world interests, which are unavoidably blocked by the colonial system. It represents a surrender of American interests on this issue to the British—*as the price of setting up an Anglo-American bloc against the Soviet Union in world affairs.*

What forces in American political life determined the fundamental reversal of the Roosevelt course which began in San Francisco and has since made itself felt in all the problems related to making the peace?

The conclusion is inescapable, from any objective examination of the facts, that Senator Vandenberg, representing the Tory core of the Republican Party, took command of American foreign policy at San Francisco. With some modification made through President Truman's intervention to restore specific Roosevelt commitments, Vandenberg has been in command ever since. Roosevelt's foreign policies have not been applied in a single case since his death, except when it was a matter of record that he had made specific commitments to other nations.

Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Senator Vandenberg to membership in the American delegation to San Francisco. But he certainly did not intend to place him in command. On the contrary the clear purpose of his appointment was the more effectively to defeat his views, by forcing him to formulate his position on each issue as it arose and not leave him free to defeat the decisions of the San Francisco Conference in the Senate by a free use of demagogy, as Lodge defeated Wilson in the Senate after World War I. Roosevelt expected to remain in command of policy at least through the San Francisco Conference. His sudden death, and the confusion that followed it, was Vandenberg's opportunity.

President Truman has carefully refrained from assuming direct personal responsibility for the departures from Roosevelt's foreign policy. His only active part has been to restore and apply Roosevelt's commitments. He has kept the door open for a possible resumption of command over foreign relations in the spirit of Roosevelt. His caution in exerting his constitutional powers could be, and had to be, respected for a certain time to avoid certain difficulties which had taxed the capacities of a bigger man. If Truman, however, is to preserve the Roosevelt policies in any form, he cannot do it through Vandenberg or anyone who leans on Vandenberg. He can do it only by stepping forward himself and taking the helm as F.D.R. would have done. Truman muffed his great opportunity to do this when he walked out on his approval of Henry Wallace's famous foreign-policy speech.

Much time and ground have already been lost. Re-

actionaries in American public life have seized the initiative to undo Roosevelt's work. The critical time for making peace is now upon us. The peoples' democratic forces must exert themselves fully, or face the prospect of repeating the fiasco that resulted from the peacemaking after World War I.