

## Chapter II

### OUR JOINT WAR EFFORT: WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE PEACE

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AMERICA AND THE SOVIET UNION FOUND UNITY AND co-operation in the war against Axis domination of the earth. This was accomplished from the American side through the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt. This unity alone saved most of the earth from Hitler's rule and saved America itself from disaster.

The joint Soviet-American war effort was the most fundamental experience in American history—and the least known. Its results will leave a permanent imprint upon our country and the world. Yet during the war it was little publicized, in contrast with our lesser collaboration with Britain, which was played up in newspapers, motion pictures, and radio in all its detail. And at the moment this is written (September, 1946) we seem almost to have forgotten altogether that we just went through the greatest war in history side by side with the Soviet Union, that victory depended absolutely upon Soviet-American co-operation.

Short memories are dangerous things in this modern world. Let us therefore re-examine some of the high points of the Soviet-American joint war effort, and what it means for the peace.

It was characteristic of F.D.R. that he immediately

understood on June 22, 1941, that the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union was inevitably also an attack upon the United States. While Churchill could speak openly, associating England with the Soviet Union in the war, Roosevelt had to speak carefully, because America was not yet attacked and would enter the war only when the attack came. But Roosevelt's actions proved better than words that he understood that the Soviet Union was America's natural ally. He knew that the attack would unleash such a Japanese blow as that which followed on December 7, even though it was expected at another point than Pearl Harbor. He sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow to organize the first flow of American aid. Hopkins, returning from his mission, brought Churchill to meet with Roosevelt in the famous conference that produced the Atlantic Charter, beginning of the United Nations.

The foundation which gave validity to the Atlantic Charter was Roosevelt's decision, on Hopkins' recommendation, to back the Soviet Union with Lend-lease aid to the limit of America's ability. Without that decision the Charter could not have been issued or would have been empty declamation, a scrap of paper. Britain had her back to the wall and could not even dream of a counteroffensive against the Nazis in Europe with her own forces. America did not even enter the war until she was herself attacked, and then it was over two years before she entered Europe with her forces. But the Red Army of the Soviet Union was fighting all along the line and methodically destroying the Nazi military power.

It was the birth of Soviet-American unity which gave

historic significance to the Roosevelt-Churchill meetings on *U.S.S. Augusta* and *H.M.S. Prince of Wales* in the summer of 1941, and to the Charter issued from those meetings.

Roosevelt was far ahead of the country as a whole in recognizing the realities of the war, foreseeing its course, and already hammering out an independent American policy—rejecting the British strategy—a policy which was the foundation for the Soviet-American agreement which was to lead to victory.

Already in the Atlantic meeting there began the great struggle between Roosevelt and Churchill which ended only with Roosevelt's death. It was a struggle between two conflicting conceptions of grand strategy for the war, representing the conflicting objectives of Britain and America, and not a mere struggle between two personalities. It was the most decisive aspect of the war, for Roosevelt's idea of grand strategy later met and merged with that of Stalin, and became the joint Soviet-American war plan to which Churchill's strategy was subordinated. It was a hard struggle, and shortly before his death Roosevelt remarked to several friends: "I'm tired, as though I had been pushing Churchill uphill in a wheelbarrow for years."

Churchill's idea of grand strategy considered the alliance with the Soviet Union as purely military expediency. He would give the Soviets a minimum of practical assistance and would direct the British and American operations in such a way as to hem in and isolate the Soviet Union in the peace to follow. He was not too reticent concerning his hope that Nazi Germany

and the Soviet Union would mutually exhaust one another. His many pessimistic expressions about Soviet military weaknesses were fathered by that wish. Roosevelt, on the contrary, had decided upon fullhearted cooperation with the Soviet Union not only in the conduct of the war, but also and especially for a durable peace at its conclusion. This initial difference in approach produced, step by step, a conflict between two opposing systems of grand strategy which reached into every aspect of the war. This fact was never fully revealed while the war was on. Indeed, it is only after the war has been ended over a year that the full outlines of the struggle can be made known to the public. But this knowledge is of supreme importance today in dealing with the problems of peace.

A false and misleading myth has been current in this country that during the war there existed an especially close agreement and co-operation between Britain and America, and that this relationship should now be continued in the making of peace.

On the contrary the basic agreement and co-operation grew up between America and the Soviets. Churchill, for the British government, did his best to break up and defeat this agreement. The war was won on the basis of the Soviet-American strategical concepts, and not Churchill's. The effect of Churchill's strategy was not helpful in directing the war, but only delayed and made more costly the victory.

It was Soviet-American agreement, unity, and co-operation which was decisive for military victory over the Axis.

It will be Soviet-American agreement, unity, and co-operation which will be decisive in the achievement of a stable peace.

Why is it necessary now to speak of Soviet-American agreement? Why not continue the wartime formula of Anglo-Soviet-American alliance?

Unfortunately that is no longer possible. During the war it was inexpedient to reveal to the enemy the full depth of the British divergence from the Soviet-American concepts of war strategy. In the end and with delays, it was the Soviet-American strategy which was applied and won out. It was successful, thank to the facts that behind the Roosevelt-Stalin strategy the Red Army was the principal military force, that the Americans were to do the main fighting in the west, and that Britain was entirely dependent upon American supplies. Today, however, a polite and diplomatic reticence in regard to those struggles is no longer possible nor desirable. It has become necessary to mobilize new forces to restore Roosevelt's policies. The open revelation and discussion of all the war experience, including the Roosevelt-Churchill struggle, have become necessary, if America is to realize the Roosevelt plan for peace.

What was the Churchill grand strategy for the war? It boiled down to a few simple ideas, magnificent in their undiluted arrogance, intolerable in their disregard for American and Soviet interests.

America was assigned the basic role of defeating Japan (always, of course, with token British participation!), supplying Britain, and furnishing the bulk of man power for British-directed operations in Africa, the

Near East, and the Balkans (through Italy, the Adriatic, and Greece). The Soviet Union was given the role of disposing of Hitler's main armies, with the hope and expectation that this would bleed her white, leaving her exhausted and powerless. Britain would conserve her strength, guard the Empire and its life lines, and finally, when the Soviet Union had exerted her full efforts, strike through the Balkan mountains (which Churchill, with a fine sense of humor, described as the "soft underbelly of Europe") to face the Red Army somewhere on the plains of Poland. France and western Europe would then be voluntarily surrendered by Hitler, as the "price" he would pay for absorption into the triumphant British (and American!) forces in the west. The peace would thus be predetermined in its pure Churchillian form. The Soviet Union would have little to say, and that largely as a matter of "courtesy" if she "behaved well"; she would retire behind her 1939 borders, with some rectifications in favor of Churchill's friends. The main Nazi military and economic assets would be preserved under British hegemony and direction; Europe would be reconstructed on the basis of "legitimacy" and the *status quo ante*. America would retire from Europe, Africa, the Near East, and most of Asia, but would continue to finance the British in return for trade privileges within the British-controlled world.

The Soviet-American concept of grand strategy was quite different, but equally simple in its outlines. Its great virtue which was lacking in Churchill's was that it corresponded to the real relation of forces in the world and the Allied coalition.

Nazi Germany was to be attacked with the full force of the coalition at once from east and west; the western attack should be through France and the Low Countries, before Hitler had time to fortify their coasts. When Hitler was disposed of, the Soviet Union was to strike and destroy the main Japanese armies in Manchuria. The coalition armies entering Germany should meet along a predetermined line (along the Elbe) and should occupy Germany in three zones, with joint occupation of Berlin. Surrender of the Germans should be unconditional and simultaneous on all fronts, to the three Great Powers acting together. The liberated countries should determine their own future, with the chief Allies supporting interim governments based upon coalitions of all parties and groups which joined together in the liberation struggle. The vexed and complicated problems of the colonial peoples, and the future of the colonial empires (British, French, Dutch, etc.) should be taken up after victory, with the understanding that the Atlantic Charter's application is world-wide.

Because this Soviet-American strategy corresponded to the real relation of forces, because it harmonized with the interests of most peoples, and especially because Roosevelt and Stalin were able to understand one another so well (despite wide differences in language, ideology, and background, they "clicked" at their first meeting as Elliott Roosevelt and others have reported), Churchill's strategy was pushed aside. The Soviet-American strategy finally prevailed and determined the main course of the war.

Churchill had some minor successes in modifying and distorting the Soviet-American plan in some respects. The attack from the west through France was delayed for a long time, largely through draining off men and supplies to secondary operations in Africa, the Near East, and Italy, and by British obstruction in the work of the Joint Staff. The burden of the war upon the Soviet Union was thereby greatly increased. The application of joint policy in Greece was entirely thrown overboard by the unilateral action of the British, and a purely puppet government was set up there by military *coup d'état*. Churchill, while signing the Atlantic Charter and similar declarations, openly declared that none of them would be applied to any part of the British Empire or any of its subjects. As the war approached its end, the British made desperate efforts to install their puppets, mostly monarchists and reactionaries, over the liberated countries, but were defeated everywhere except in Greece. A desperate last-minute effort was made to accept the surrender of Germany in the west before it was consummated in the east, but this was blocked by the determined action of Eisenhower. Despite these and other distortions, the Soviet-American grand strategy prevailed until victory in the military operations of the war.

During this joint war effort the United States and the Soviet Union learned that they were much closer to each other than to any other nation, including Britain, in their judgment of how the war should be conducted. They could arrive at agreement between themselves more quickly and easily than they could with anyone

else. They found they could depend upon one another for the carrying out of these agreements, more surely than they could depend upon any other.

How is this unexampled harmony and co-operation between America and the Soviet Union during the war to be explained?

They certainly did not arise from any similarity in social, political, and economic organization of the two countries. America is the highest developed capitalistic country while the Soviet Union is building a socialistic system after abolishing capitalism. The two countries represent the highest development of two rival systems.

They do not spring from sympathies of a traditional or ideological character. America still maintains the ideology of early bourgeois or capitalist society more nearly intact than any other modern nation, while the Soviet Union is proletarian and Marxist. In America even the labor movement is predominantly nonsocialist (in contrast to most countries, even England), while in the Soviet Union there is no considerable part of the population with anything resembling the American ideology. No, the ideological factor did not contribute to co-operation but on the contrary it was an obstacle to be overcome. It was with Britain, not with the Soviet Union, that America had a common ideological background.

No more can they be explained by "personal factors" of leadership, since it is hard to imagine two more contrasting personalities, in most respects, than Roosevelt and Stalin. Roosevelt and Churchill had much more in common as individuals than Roosevelt and Stalin. But

still it is a fact that it was with Stalin, rather than with Churchill, that Roosevelt was able to reach agreement on the most important questions of the war and of the preparations for the peace.

Nor is it any help to have recourse to a theory of "accidents," that the chief leaders just "happened" despite their differences to "hit it off" with one another. Even street accidents are known by the insurance companies to follow certain laws, and this is even more true of "historical" accidents. There must be a more basic explanation for even such "accidents" as this.

Why should anyone, however, look far and wide for any and all sorts of "explanations" which do not really explain? There is a very simple and logical way to understand Soviet-American harmony and co-operation as worked out between Roosevelt and Stalin. It will be found in each case of Soviet-American agreement that the vital interests of both countries were carefully and thoroughly combined, and that these were further harmonized with the interests of other countries, especially of the smaller nations and subject peoples. It was the *common interests* of both nations that gave vitality and strength to the Soviet-American accord.

These common interests of America and the Soviet Union will be examined more at length in the course of this book. We may sum them up briefly at this point as being: the quickest possible and most economical victory in the war, with maximum mobilization of the liberation movements in the occupied lands for that purpose; the avoidance of large-scale civil wars in the countries liberated from the Axis, and therefore support of

the democratic transformation of those countries; a long peace for the reconstruction of the world, the industrialization of backward areas, and the liberation of colonial and subject peoples. These goals benefit both America and the Soviet Union and can be achieved only by the co-operation of the two countries.

It was because Churchill ignored and violated these common interests that his grand strategy for the war was rejected and defeated by the combined strength of America and the Soviet Union. This is the central fact. Everything else is incidental or accidental.

It is important that we discovered a broad area of common interest during the war, between America and the Soviet Union, sufficiently deep-going and strong to overcome our traditional and ideological ties with Britain. For if such common interest existed for the purposes of war, they are even more decisive today in the questions of peace.

Our joint war effort with the Soviet Union revealed to America, if it is willing to learn the deepest lesson of its greatest experience, that our most enduring and most vital national interests were more in harmony with those of the Soviet Union than with those of any other country. It showed that all our ideas which point in any other direction are unsound.

America has not fully digested and assimilated this great lesson. As soon as the war was over, Americans by and large wanted to forget it, not to think about it or learn its lessons. We wanted to relax. We went back to "business as usual" with a bang and wanted to restore the prewar status, as a whole, including all its false ideas

and prejudices and practices. This was true, first of all, of the leaders of our business community, our conservatives and reactionaries.

This nostalgic attempt to return to the prewar *status quo ante* will not, however, be found to be very practical. It will not work. It will not work for anyone. We cannot, we dare not, "forget the war" until we have learned from it the true character of the world in which we must continue to live, and how it has been changed and must be changed further as a result of the war.

It is the hardest of all the lessons of the war that the old world of 1939 will not and cannot be restored in any of its chief aspects.

This is the most difficult lesson for America especially, because this country experienced none of the direct devastation of war and because even our moral and intellectual participation had something of a detached quality, as though we were observing something that happened on another planet or in another age. Even our returning soldiers find it difficult, if not impossible, seriously to discuss their war experiences with the folks back home. Most of them soon stop trying to do so and join in the mood that directs us to forget the war as some horrible accident that was not really a part of our lives.

Unless we are willing to drift—or be dragged—into another and more destructive war, we will find it necessary to assimilate our war experience as a part of our national life, to learn its lessons, and to adjust our views, our ideas, our policies, and our international friendships accordingly.