

CURRENT MAGAZINES

THE PROBLEM OF THE SOVIET UNION

Veto and Collaboration—Mr. R. Schlesinger, in the *Fortnightly*.

Getting on with Russia—Mr. W. Mandel, in the *New Republic*.

Russian Policy in the Far East—Mr. R. J. Kerner, in the *Yale Review*.

Have Nations any Morals?—Mr. W. T. Stace, in the *Atlantic*.

NO doubt the title I have given this article will elicit in some quarters derisive comment. It is like the title "Problem Children", by which ingenuous but outspoken youth was lately moved to protest "We are not problem children: unfortunately we have problem parents". The Soviet Sixth of the World, as the Dean of Canterbury describes it, may hear with similar impatience about the self-conscious concern of other countries for a regime they might better imitate than criticize.

But anyone who has watched the movement of international relations, since the war in Europe was officially declared at an end, must have realized more and more how the question of adjustment between the Soviet Union and other Powers is the most difficult, and the most urgent, now to be solved. Other questions would quickly solve themselves, many of them indeed would automatically disappear, if this one had been satisfactorily settled. It was already grave before Russia entered into the Second World War. This fighting partnership, of Powers so different as to make Mr. Churchill say that the ideological character of the war was disappearing, set problems of new and baffling complexity for the terms of peace.

I.

The London Conference of Foreign Ministers revealed a sharp conflict of purpose between Russia and her British-American allies. It had been hailed as an admirable safeguard for unity that there should be such meeting at comparatively short intervals, for accommodation of differences on matters of detail and for agreement on fundamental principles to be announced with one voice to the world. The unfortunate discord of the previous summer, between the statement from Mr. Eden and that from Mr. Stettinius about the relation of the Allies to the domestic politics of Italy, showed the importance of Foreign Ministers giving candid advice to one another in

preliminary private conference, rather than conducting a public debate by the issue of rival manifestoes. It was distinctly disappointing that the first attempt to use this machinery of adjustment resulted in a conflict from which the disputants had to retire with confession of no progress except to a quarrel.

What were we to make of Mr. Molotov's demand that France should not be admitted even to share in the discussions of the settlement of the Balkan States? Or of the outburst of resentment in the Russian press over British and American refusal to recognize the governments set up in Rumania and Bulgaria notoriously on Soviet pressure and with no discernible title to represent those Balkan peoples? When Mr. Bevin described Mr. Molotov as talking in "Hitlerian" strain, and elicited the retort that, unless so offensive a comment was withdrawn, the Russian delegate would leave the Conference at once, it was plain that on its first trial the device for conciliation had served rather to exasperate.

The project thus broken off in the first week of October at London was resumed in mid-December at Moscow. It was soon reported from "informed foreign quarters" as making progress towards settlement of differences. No official *communiqué* having been issued, there was much guessing from the rumors which so closely guarded a Conference was sure to stimulate. During the eleven weeks of adjournment there had indeed been events which might well bring home to the Ministers concerned how urgent is the need for concerting a single foreign policy. The problems of European relief—those desperate puzzles about the best method of procedure for "U.N.R.R.A."—were growing worse and worse as winter was about to set in, and it was surely monstrous that the Powers responsible for meeting them should remain distracted by disputes with one another about the form of government to set up in the Balkan countries or about the redrawing of Germany's western frontier. Daily news from China, from Indo-China, from Java, from the Middle East, disclosed—a few months after the two great wars had stopped—how new wars of very considerable range had been started by the conviction that the victorious Allies were already at logger-heads. When announcement was made that the Conference was about to meet again, one hoped that a sense of the harm ensuing from delay had served to cool the temper of the previous abortive negotiation. The Report now in our hands indicates that such favorable change had taken place.

But while there was thus good ground in reason to hope that a more co-operative spirit would prevail, there had developed on the very eve of the Moscow meeting some evidence of even sharper conflict. At London the dispute had been concerned with France's right (urged by Great Britain and the United States, denied by Russia) to be heard on the Balkan settlement. By the time the Foreign Ministers came together again at Moscow, there was additional strain regarding Turkey. Russia's demand for a naval base on the Dardanelles, which it was understood that Turkey, supported by Great Britain and the United States, was resisting, had developed further into specification of some hundreds of miles of territory which the Turks were asked to cede to their great neighbour. Reports of large concentration of Russian troops "for manoeuvres" in Bulgaria, near to the Turkish border, increased the misgiving about what might be afoot. Finally, the outbreak of insurrection in Azerbaijan, the Iranian province close to the Soviet Union, under leaders notoriously pro-Russian and but recently eager promoters of Russia's claim upon Iran for oil concessions, was too suggestive to be explained away. The Iranian government complained bitterly to the United Nations Organization (of which Iran and Russia are both members) that its measures of domestic discipline, to re-establish order in a disturbed province, were being deliberately frustrated by Soviet military authorities. Government forces, it seemed, had been ordered back to Teheran by the Commander of this foreign garrison. It was even alleged that the rebels had been supplied with Russian armament!

Naturally British and American notes of enquiry were despatched to Moscow, expressing conviction that either the facts had been misreported or some Russian officer had misunderstood his orders from Moscow, and urging that so lamentable a strain upon the harmony of allies be at once repaired. It cannot be said that the Soviet answer, especially when considered in the light of the comments it drew from the government of Iran, went far to adjust the situation. In circumstances so far from encouraging, even as compared with those of September last, the Foreign Ministers reassembled at Moscow. But they did better than had been feared.

They reached the sort of compromise which indicates a change of will much more than a change of judgment. Every consideration regarding the Balkan States, both as related to France and in their internal management, had been as competently urged and was as clearly understood in September at

London as in the following December at Moscow. Anglo-American suspicion of Soviet designs to make Rumania and Bulgaria tributaries to Russia (as Poland had been made) could be supported by just as strong evidence at the later date as at the earlier: on the other hand, Soviet suspicion of capitalist designs at "encirclement" had lost no ground in the interval. The summer had been marked by outbursts, sometimes fierce, sometimes just surly, but always unpleasant, about Russia's right to share in the surveillance of Northern Africa and even to a base on the Red Sea being quite as clear as the British right to places of vantage "for protection of the overseas Empire" all over the world, and the Moscow press had shown itself very critical indeed about the treatment of India. The reply—about Ukraina, about the Baltic States, about the transparent pretexts for Soviet interference in Iran—made the tension a little worse. Russian proposals to extract from Turkey the concession of a base on the Dardanelles and even one hundred and eighty miles of Turkish coastline threatened for awhile to bring about consequences very grave indeed. But at Moscow, with no more than the same reason as at London, there was more will to conciliate. Russia agreed to make no peace treaty with Rumania or Bulgaria until France (with other Powers) should have the opportunity to modify it. As to the Bulgarian and Rumanian governments, she would share in a tripartite Commission for "broadening" the personnel at Bucharest and Sofia. She would co-operate, too, in the Far East.

But she would enter into no tripartite Commission about the Iranian province of Azerbaijan. And Turkey does not seem to have been named at Moscow. In these matters the Conference had been fruitless. It is safe to guess, too, that on them temper was sharp.

II.

Another irritant which for some time threatened to have sinister result was the close guarding of secrets about the technique of atomic bomb manufacture and use. The Moscow press became vociferous in its denunciation of such manifest lack of confidence shown towards an ally.

To determine whether this was a reasonable complaint, it is needful to review the circumstances which brought the Soviet Union into alliance with Great Britain and later with the United States. If the partnership was merely for a single pur-

pose, formed under pressure of a common peril by Powers whose general foreign policies had been previously and might be again very different, there is no force in the argument that they must in fairness to each other share armament secrets after the victory they combined to secure has been won. Russia's allies acted simply on the long established practice governing such matters, a practice conspicuously followed by the Soviet Union itself in respect to its military secrets. Who ever heard of a demand that when the ingenuity of research develops a new and faster torpedo-destroyer, or a plane able to carry a larger load of bombs than had before been possible, Foreign Powers at the time on friendly relations with the Power which has thus advanced in war equipment should be shown how it is done? Mr. Churchill aptly observed that he had no doubt a request for admission of British military engineers to examine Russian arsenals (if so preposterous a request were made) would meet stern refusal. Mr. Byrnes put it with summary terseness: "Neither we nor any other nation would be expected to share our armament secrets until it was certain that effective safeguards had been developed to ensure our mutual protection."

One cannot sincerely present the considerations determining public opinion, both British and American, on this matter without recalling the circumstances of August, 1939, and again those of June, 1941. Russia came into the war after nearly two years of closely preserved neutrality. She came in because she was attacked. "Vindicating the public law of Europe", "re-establishing good faith", "making the world safe for democracy", had nothing whatever to do with that Moscow decision of four and a half years ago. For nearly two years of intense struggle, including the year 1940 when Great Britain stood alone for such ideals, and of which Pierre Laval could ask "Did any Frenchman in his senses then doubt that Germany would win?", the Soviet Union observed her Pact of Friendship with our great enemy. For almost the whole period of our war with Japan she remained on such terms not only amicable but co-operative as provided renewal of fisheries agreements that meant a very great deal to the military organizers at Tokyo. It has been the bitter complaint of Poland that if Russia in 1939 had simply stood aloof, "if she had not given the green light to Hitler", the Second World War might well have been prevented. At least we know for certain that during the first months of the war the French Communists, who notoriously shaped their policy to co-operate with Russia, were systematic *saboteurs* in the French munition

factories, and that not until Russia became a belligerent, were they recalled to their own patriotic obligations. What brought the Soviet Union into the war was the simple and surely sufficient reason that Hitler's Air Force had begun, without a moment's warning, a rain of bombs on Russian cities. Self-preservation may be the first law of nature, but those who act simply upon it should not claim credit for a disinterested altruism.

I am not here concerned to argue whether there was good ground, in memories of the past and especially of what had taken place the previous year at Munich, to justify the caution of 1939 at Moscow. A reason which many find convincing, lies in the suspicion of the Soviet leaders that Neville Chamberlain and Paul Daladier were manoeuvring to divert Hitler's attack from the West to the East, and that even then there was intense peril to Russia in those anti-Soviet influences which Rudolf Hess would later make his air flight to Scotland to exploit. To discuss these considerations is here irrelevant. I mention them merely to illustrate the point of my argument that the "alliance" of Great Britain and the United States with the Soviet Union was one for an immediate necessity, that they had a common enemy whom by some means they must overcome if they would themselves survive, but that the causes which produced this enmity were so different in the two cases as to make it altogether uncertain whether the alliance would survive the common victory. What sense is there in the contention that Powers so remote from each other in general interests and methods should share each other's armament discoveries, after the purpose which brought them into such adventitious partnership has been achieved? Mr. Churchill's avowal that despite his admiration for Marshal Stalin's work in the war, he is not retracting a single word of his past speeches against Bolshevism is a provocative to serious thought.

No reference was made at the Moscow Conference to any resentment over secrecy about the atomic bomb. Mr. Byrnes, in his broadcast to the American people, was able to report that no information on that matter was given, and that none was solicited. The essentially reasonable character of the reticence so far maintained has apparently become everywhere clear, and it is but an occasional peevish voice that continues the complaint.

III.

There remains the overmastering problem—What can be done to secure the world against the new and terrific peril from unscrupulous use of atomic energy? In its special reference to relations between the Soviet Union and the so-called “capitalist” Powers, this is a problem of two very different “ideologies”, which have fought each other fiercely in the past, and whose conflict in the future, with the new weapon available, would be such as appals one to conceive.

The experts, on whom laymen must depend for guidance here, seem to agree that the “secret” of the bomb cannot remain long a monopoly of the Powers which now hold it. Indeed, as these lines are being written, a report is quoted in large front-page headlines by the press (I know not with what authority) that Russia has got the technique now, and that her scientists have devised a bomb superior to the one called “Anglo-American”. Anyhow, we must make up our minds that before very long the present monopolist Powers will have no monopoly in this matter, and those who have best right to be heard on scientific possibilities dismiss the suggestion that effective defence against atomic warfare may be found.

There is, however, always the defence which lies in counter-attack, and the vista of competitive bomb production haunts some of us like a nightmare. All countries with great congested centres of population have reason to join in quest for the safeguard they alike need. Although London is exposed to special peril, those who have responsibility for New York, for Paris, for Leningrad, have much now to turn their thought from the old cherished sanctities of national sovereignty. However strongly, then, a British Government may feel that in Russia human rights are nullified, or a Russian Government may feel that in Great Britain human rights have never been understood, they may well suspend these controversies about each other’s wisdom or virtue in view of a danger against which only common action can insure either of them.

To the question of their common safety it seems to grow clearer and clearer that the only answer lies in the construction of some form of world government. As Prof. Laski pointed out in a recent broadcast, the dependability of Pacts and Treaties, in each of which “national sovereignty” is guarded with anxious solicitude, has passed into a stage at which it can no longer be put forward with seriousness. Apart even

from the terrifying new risk of atomic warfare, the development of the old method of diplomatic negotiation had shown, in the months after peace had nominally returned to Europe, how little difference had been made by their partnership in the Second World War to the mutual distrust between the Soviet Union and the Capitalist Powers. During the weeks prior to the Moscow Conference one was hearing of much angry protest, from British and American and Canadian quarters, against Russia's claim to share in the settlement of Tripolitania, Eritrea, and Palestine. It was reported from Paris that she desired to have Palestine committed to joint guardianship of the United Nations. One even heard that the Soviet authorities had a scheme to abolish the whole "mandate" system set up after the First World War, and to make each of the so-called "immature" countries the ward not of a single advanced country, but of the whole United Nations organization. Proposals of the sort were received by the London press in a manifestly irritable mood, and it seems quite likely that they were intended less as serious projects than as forms of retort to British and American intervention in the area which Russia regards as her "sphere of influence".

It is equally probable that the sharp note of British reply to the Soviet claim for a share in either African or Middle Eastern settlement arose from belief that the claim was thus merely a tactical move. Many are convinced that Russia, so far from desiring to see a United Nations mandate established for the immature countries, in the place of the scheme which assigned Palestine to Great Britain, Syria and Lebanon to France, is in truth set upon continuing and even deepening the sphere-of-influence method, because it promises particular advantage to herself. On this theory, it was as a shrewd dialectical ruse that she presented the alternative: "Either you will agree to exclude France from having a voice in the settlement of the Balkans and to recognize there the governments acceptable to the Soviet Union, or we shall claim a voice in the settlement both of Africa and of the Middle East."

To this, surely, the true answer is to invite not only Russia but all the nations which were at war, as the Moscow Conference phrase runs "with substantial military force" against the Axis Powers, to share in the settlement of the post-war world everywhere. The Soviet Union has decided to be more compliant than she had been in certain areas, but it would be idle to pretend that the new alarms about Iran and Turkey are other than

grave. There are historical causes to account for the mutual suspicion, and it is undeniable that there have been faults on both—indeed on many—sides. But the planning of the world's future cannot be continuously obstructed or postponed by this. The peril of atomic warfare may prove the one influence by which an accommodation, otherwise urgent but persistently avoided, will be rendered inevitable. Will the two conditions on which Professor Laski insists (1) dropping the veto clauses and (2) forbidding secession from the United Nations be fulfilled by a revised charter? I see no method other than that of their common acceptance of partnership in a world government, including many other partners, by which either the safety of any Power can now be assured or the strain between Russia and her western Allies can be effectively removed. Nor would it involve loss of national dignity anywhere, in any sense in which national dignity is worth respecting.

H. L. S.