

Russia and the Peace

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BOTH the Dumbarton Oaks Conference and the recent discussions between Churchill and Stalin on the Polish issue give reason to hope that the chasm which divides Russia and the West is being partly bridged. The chasm, however, so deep (as the religious veneration and the religious hatred, with which Russian policies are viewed, attests) that we must continue to regard the problem of our relation to Russia as the primary hazard to a future peace. Even the most ideal constitutional schemes of world order, to which our idealists are so prone, will not guarantee peace if Russia is not brought into the general world system. The system must undoubtedly be better than the Dumbarton Oaks plan, in the sense that it must give better constitutional guarantees to the small powers. It must be less of a pure big power alliance. But any workable system will acknowledge the hegemony of the great nations in the world community and will apportion responsibility in proportion to power, as the old League did not do.

The provision of the Dumbarton Oaks plan demanding the unanimity of the great powers on any vital decision, while a juridic absurdity if it is assumed that the plan envisages a world government, is not so absurd if the actual realities are considered. The demand for unanimity proves that this is really primarily a big power alliance, and that lack of unanimity on any vital matter would in fact lead to war. It also proves that Russia is afraid of being outvoted in the Council by the Western powers, a fear which has at least this justification that the Anglo-Saxon powers are closer to each other than either is to Russia. These provisions make sense only if it is borne in mind that the first necessity of a world system is to keep Russia in it. The second is not to pay a higher price than necessary for this boon.

The intransigences of Russia on questions affecting her Eastern frontier and sphere of influence have aroused the not unnatural fears that Russia will seek to dominate the whole of Europe; and it must be conceded that there is always the possibility that we may pay too high a price for Russian cooperation by delivering Europe into her hands.

On the other hand it is important to recognize that what seems from one perspective as the impulse to dominate, is from another perspective a desire to guarantee one's own security. What seems like a threat is usually meant by the agent as a defensive measure. This does not prove that either the threat or the defensive measure is wise. The Russian policy does in fact accentuate those tendencies in the West

which caused her initial apprehensions. This is the old vicious circle of mutual fear in international relations. Obviously the Russians are not going to put their full trust in any system of mutual security. They are going to insist upon some measure of special security. It will be well to remember that we will do the same in terms of our naval strategy for instance.

Remembering Christ's insistence that we note the beam in our own eye before we seek to cast the mote from our brother's eye, it is important for Christians in America to review our own policies before we condemn the Russian policies out of hand. What are the Russians afraid of? They remember that there were vast numbers of people in the Western world who would have gladly bought immunity from the Nazi peril, if they could have turned its fury toward the East. That was Munich. The Russian answer to Munich was the Nazi-Soviet pact. We can make nice distinctions about the comparative stupidity of these two policies; but the judgments will remain in the category of the pot and the kettle.

Secondly the Russians know that there are even now many people in the West, particularly in the religious world, who think that Russia is a more deadly enemy of civilization than Hitler was. They have heard Father Fulton Sheen's broadcasts. The Russians are, thirdly, not at all certain that the constitutional and other difficulties which America faces in determining our relation to the community of nations, may not result in America's withdrawal from world responsibility. Of course Russia is increasing those difficulties hourly; but let us remain for a moment with our own beam.

Finally the Russians know that the rich democracies have a divided soul. They are democracies and they would like to establish democracy in Europe; but they are also rich democracies and are afraid of all the revolutionary ferment on the continent. Their inclination, as proved in both Italy and France, is to come to terms with conservative elements in the hope of avoiding the radicalism which fizzes in the wine of democracy as soon as the stopper is removed. These timidities of the Western nations give the Russians a tremendous advantage on the continent; for they create sources of power for Russia against the West, which only an angelic statesmanship would not be tempted to exploit.

This does not mean that the Russians are bent upon making Europe communistic. Communism has obviously been debased to become merely one of many weapons in the Russian armory. In Roumania the

Russians used the royal house. In Czechoslovakia they will not threaten a democratic government. In Poland they announce the policy of small peasant holdings, rather than communism. They may even restore the Hapsburgs in Austria if it suits their purposes, though at the moment it probably doesn't. In Yugoslavia they will support King Peter if King Peter supports Tito. They will be all things to all men, provided they can establish their influence. If the Allies persist in the stupid policy of dismembering Germany, the Russians will acquiesce and dominate their portion of the dismembered body more completely than Britain and America will dominate their respective portions.

All this simply means that despite Teheran and Dumbarton Oaks no plan has been worked out for the reorganization of Europe which would remove either the Russian fear that we intend to dominate Europe or our fear that Russia intends to do so.

If the failure to arrive at basic agreements in regard to the organization of Europe is analyzed it will appear that Russia and the West are equally guilty of the failure; but that we are more unwise than the Russians because we have more to lose from such a failure.

One reason why no basic organization of Europe is contemplated is political. The power impulses of both Russia and the Anglo-Saxon Nations are threatened by such an organization. A tolerably organized Europe would tend to become another power (with France as the probable center of its strength). Nations move by instinct more than reason and the instinct for power among the great nations unconsciously seeks to avert the rise of the continent. The other reason for the failure of the great nations to organize Europe is economic.

The economic system of Europe can be built in neither the image of Western capitalism nor Russian communism. General de Gaulle's recent address in which he explained why France must have a "planned economy" showed quite clearly why an impoverished and destroyed Europe must regard the American nostalgia for "free enterprise" as fantastic. We may or may not have the margins to indulge in such luxuries. But the continent clearly does not have. On the other hand a consistent collectivism has been proved by history to be the seed-pot of tyranny; and Europe has its surfeit of tyranny. Left to itself it would therefore seek to achieve in both politics and economics something less and something more than either democratic liberalism or collectivism. There is thus a remote possibility that a new synthesis of economic and political institutions could be worked out upon the continent, which would be neither in the Russian or the American image. But there is small likelihood that the economic prejudices of either Russia or the West will allow such a development to take place, despite the fact that it would not only be good for

Europe but would also be the only way of solving the problem of the rivalry between the great powers over the prostrate body of Europe. It would destroy the fear of each side that the other side intends to dominate the continent; and it would obviate the peril that Europe will again be rent asunder by these rival claims.

While the power impulses and the economic prejudices of both sides, which make such a consummation highly unlikely, are equally responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves, it must be added that the West has more to gain than Russia by seeking such a rapprochement in Europe; and is therefore more stupid for not attempting it. If we are going to slug it out with Russia in Europe, her advantages over us are obvious. She is closer to the scene. She can count on ethnic affinities in the Balkans to weight the scales in her favor; and in the ideological conflict she can exploit the more immediate interests of a poor Europe in security and we have only the more ultimate interest in liberty on our side. It would thus be to our advantage to seek an accord. On the other hand the advantages of Russia are so obvious that this may tempt her to follow a ruthless policy, no matter how hard we try to come to an agreement. It must be said in all candor that there is no guarantee that a creative approach by the Anglo-Saxon powers toward Europe would gain the Russian assent. Yet there must be some understanding in Russia for the fact that this tussle for power in Europe is a dangerous game, no matter what advantages the one or the other side may have. For the end of the game is war. No side has enough advantages to cow the other into easy submission. Ultimately the failure of the great powers to reach a genuine agreement will propel us into a third world war; and that fact will dwarf all other considerations.

There are no doubt readers of this journal who think that all the horrible realities discussed in these pages ought not to be mentioned in a Christian journal. We ought rather to move on the high level of international constitutionalism, they will argue. Let us demand the real organization of the world, they will say, and thus eliminate these power-political rivalries. But the sorrowful fact is that though we need much more than an alliance of the great powers to achieve justice, we can have nothing that we need if the core of a world community is not established in the mutual trust of the great powers. Even the most perfect constitutional scheme will not obviate the necessity of meeting the issues which we confront in the heightening tension between Russia and the West.

Though the prospects of success are not too reassuring, we shall not increase those prospects by taking a completely one-sided view of the issues. Among the many hazards which we face in the relations between Russia and the West is the religious

aura, which attaches to Russian policy because she is actually the historical embodiment of a secularized religious movement which seems to me to be identical with the kingdom of God and which appears to others to be the work of Satan. This religious emotion clouds all political judgments and makes prudent decisions extremely difficult.

Fortunately there are encouraging as well as disheartening aspects in the relations between Russia and the West. Many conservative elements in the Western world heartily desire an accord with Russia; and signs of Russia's desire to accommodate herself to the West, are not wanting. While the ideological conflict between collectivism and individualism is a real hazard to good relations, it must also be recorded that the thought in the Western world, particularly in Britain and to some extent in America, is less dogmatic on that subject than before the war. If a tolerable accord with Russia can be worked out, time and the exigencies of history may qualify and soften the

dogmas of the past. The actual experience of the European nations, as they seek to reestablish minimal economic and political health, will certainly prove that modern technical society must find the way to justice between the Scylla of pure collectivism and the Charybdis of pure individualism. If a minimal accord can be reached, various forces of mutuality may gradually bridge the chasm which divides us. Should we fail in reaching such an accord we may expect new frictions to accentuate old conflicts.

In all our judgments upon and about Russia it is well to remember that, however vexatious its dictatorship and however embarrassing the immense self-assurance with which it approaches all issues, we are not dealing with the moral cynicism of Nazism nor with conscious design of aggression. Her will-to-power is the unconscious impulse which all strong men and nations reveal; and her self-righteousness is only slightly more unqualified than the monumental self-assurance of the so-called Christian nations.

The Free Catholic Faith

LYNN HAROLD HOUGH

What does our Lord see as He looks upon His world after His passion of two thousand years?

Perhaps the question is too searching. Perhaps the answer would be too startling. Perhaps we who by subtle and adroit processes of poets and dramatists and novelists have been taught to take a worm's eye view of the universe are only capable of thinking of man's problems in the terms of comfort and cannot rise to the height of thinking of human life in the terms of character. But the man who is a member of the Christian Church and who inherits the Christian tradition cannot escape the question easily or answer it casually.

The world upon which the living Lord looks is the world in which we live. And if we could see it with His eyes—that might be an experience of far-reaching significance. If the Christian Revelation is an actuality, there is nothing impossible about the endeavor to see the world with the eyes of Christ. At the very least the Christian Revelation must make this possible.

If a man saturated with the very essence of the New Testament documents—the classical documents of the Christian religion—comes to analyze the world in which we live, he will find that it is a world of inner chaos and of outer tragedy. The outer tragedy is most visible and is deeply and bitterly brutal. The student of all the centuries of history can find nothing worse in any century than the atrocities which have been committed in many parts of the world since 1939. It is not the purpose of this paper to be a document of indictments but the facts lie clearly before the eyes of any investigator. The evil thing let loose upon the world by Germany and Japan has in it the potency which disintegrates all moral values,

all intellectual creativity, all political freedom and all spiritual nobility.

It is only confusing the issue when we allow the inadequateness of the democratic nations to darken our clear perception of the genius of the brutal thing which has been let loose in the world. Imperfect men and imperfect nations must fight it, but their imperfections are not the relevant matters at the critical hour of the great conflict. Ultimately they must be set and conquered.

The world upon which the living Lord looks is not only a world of outer tragedy. It is a world of inner chaos. It is a world in which all the slowly appropriated insights garnered through centuries of civilized and religious life have been lost out of the minds and hearts of multitudes of men and of some powerful nations. The sense of man's free choice in the light of noble standards which is the very quality of the experience when humanism and ethical religion meet has ceased to be compelling to the world dominated by the Time Spirit. The *Zeitgeist* has ceased to be human. Impersonal and sub-human philosophies have captured the imagination of sensitive and energetic youth. If Emerson at a moment when he was not overwhelmed by his pantheistic optimism could write, "Things are in the saddle and ride mankind," the words are much more relevant today than when he uttered them. With multitudes of people the gratification of the senses has taken the place of loyalty to moral values and the reign of the nerves has taken the place of the reign of ideas. Sodom boldly challenges the City of God.

II.

In this world of inner chaos and outer tragedy, what is the Christian Church doing to offer guidance to men?