Chapter I

The Problem: An American Peace, a Soviet Peace, or a Joint Peace?

THE GREAT POWERS DECLARED TO THE WORLD AT TEheran, in December, 1943, and later at Yalta, that they intended to make an enduring peace when the Axis had been crushed, a peace that would banish the scourge and terror of war for some generations.

Very slow progress is being made in giving form and substance to this promise. American commentators and statesmen express the opinion that this delay is caused by the Soviet Union; her spokesmen retort by placing the delay at the doorstep of America. In the relations between America and the Soviet Union, their degree of understanding and co-operation—or lack of it—is clearly the key to a durable peace or the alternative sliding of the world toward a new war.

My own justification for adding a book to this discussion lies in the fact that I know both America and the Soviet Union. My study of both countries and of the world has convinced me that mutual understanding and co-operation between them, while difficult, are certainly not impossible to achieve. Since the stakes are so great, any progress in this direction which is *possible* takes on the character of *necessity*.

I speak only for myself, although I am sure many mil-

lions are thinking in the same direction. It is necessary to emphasize the personal character of this book, because in the past I have been known as spokesman for the American Communist Party. I no longer have that role. In July, 1945, my party removed me from leadership, and in February, 1946, expelled me from membership. I think that was a mistake on the part of American Communists, but that is not the subject matter of this book. I am directing myself exclusively to the issue of the *possibility*, and therefore the *necessity*, of understanding and co-operation between America and the Soviet Union, an issue which transcends all party alignments, which is vital to all Americans and to the entire world.

My experience of thirty-nine years in the American socialist, Communist, and labor movements; of twenty-five years' activity in leading positions; of fifteen years as General Secretary of the Communist Party; of several years' activity abroad in China, the Soviet Union, and other countries, and later on the Executive Committee of the Communist International (until 1940)—all qualify me to have more than casual opinions on the questions involved in Soviet-American relations. In my opinion these experiences and studies can be made of service to my country and to the cause of peace.

Let me make it explicitly clear to my readers that I am examining all questions from the standpoint of American national interests. I submit my views to the test of those interests, that they may stand or fall according to whether they prove of value to America. That does not mean that I abandon in any way my basic

socialist convictions of a lifetime of activity. I am sure that any accurate judgment of America's national interests in the modern world must be broad enough to assimilate and make use of the knowledge and experience of even that minority of Americans who hold socialist opinions to which I belong. I am further convinced that this is necessary, if America is to understand the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics sufficiently to reach a broad basis of practical co-operation for peace.

As part of the preparation for writing this book, I visited the Soviet Union for six weeks in May and June of 1946. This visit, my fifteenth in the past twenty-five years, was of great value to me. It renewed my contacts, broken during the years of war, and gave me a firsthand view of the postwar Soviet Union. I visited factories and farms, and talked with all strata of the population, including Foreign Minister Molotov. I was received as a trusted American friend, a fact which was given a practical form in an offer to appoint me as American representative of Soviet publishing houses to handle business relations with American publishers, an offer I accepted with pleasure. I understood it as sufficient evidence that the Soviet leaders are warmly sympathetic to all serious efforts for understanding with America, that they do not consider it impossible, and that without endorsing my particular American viewpoint as their own in any way, they recognized it as that of a tested friend. These facts, with other observations, convinced me that the Soviet Union has not adopted the view of "inevitable war" between the socialist and capitalist sectors of the world.

It is against this theory of "inevitable war," wherever it may show itself, that all my arguments are directed. I am profoundly convinced that a durable peace for some generations is possible and that it is a responsibility of all patriots to help realize it.

Approaching the Soviet Union through Finland, I received an illuminating example of the sort of thing that raises an "iron curtain" of misunderstanding between the Soviet Union and America.

I had shaken off some official but unannounced conductors in Helsinki (they complained about this to the American correspondents) and found my way unheralded to the Finnish side of the Soviet border. There I found I had a twenty-four-hour wait until the train for Leningrad came through. I was stranded at a wayside station without even a lunchroom in sight, and was adjusting myself to a long wait on uncomfortable station benches. This dismal prospect was dissolved by the approach of a local official offering me, in good if somewhat halting English, the hospitality of his home where a private room and hot meals awaited me. Needless to say I accepted the invitation, especially as I was known there only as an "American writer"—at least until next day.

My host joined me at dinner, after which American cigars stirred him to an eloquence unusual in my observation of Finns. He went to work at the task of educating a stray American on the problems of Finland and the world. I received a glimpse behind the curtains of how world politics find repercussions on the Finnish-

Soviet border. I quote from our conversation as recorded by me immediately after.

"Another war is coming soon," he began.

"I thought Finland had enough of war for a generation or two," I countered cautiously, feeling my way to a mixture of opposition and agreement which would bring out his thoughts most fully.

"Yes, but we can never rest until we recover our lands to the east," he replied.

"That's a big order for such a small nation, isn't it?" I asked.

"Of course we can do nothing alone," he admitted. "That was the reason for our association with Germany in the last war, which America so deplorably misunderstood. But next time we will be fighting side by side with America and England, and therefore we will be successful. Churchill showed that he understands this, in his recent speech in America. Where was it? A place called Fulton, or something like that. This last war was a failure for you. You got rid of Hitler. But now you are faced with Stalin. So you will have to fight again."

"You are familiar with Churchill's speech, I see," I said, as a diversion to gain time for digesting this morsel before having a further helping. "Was it printed in the Finnish papers?"

"No, our papers must be careful right now. You understand. But the British Broadcasting Company put a recording of it on the air many times. I listened to it three times on this short-wave receiving set right here. It was a great speech. It gave us all hope again."

"Before you place too many hopes in that speech," I

said, "you should know that it was not exactly popular in America. The last thing most Americans want is another war and they, like you, understood that Churchill was trying to prepare another war. But while you welcomed it, most Americans didn't. You see, while you can state with some definiteness why you want war—to recover your lands to the east, you say—very few Americans can see why we should go to war against the Soviet Union for that or any other reason you might name. You see the Soviet Union has nothing that Americans want, at least not enough to go to war about."

"Yes," he admitted, his face clouding, "I heard about the crowd in New York shouting against Churchill. Yes, many of your people do not yet understand why this next war is inevitable. But they will learn, they must learn."

"War is a terribly expensive thing for America," I continued, taking advantage of his first expression of doubt. "We are a rich and powerful country, it is true. But what is the use of being rich and powerful only to spend all our wealth and power in one war after another? The last war cost us three hundred billions of dollars, to mention only the money side of it, and another war would cost even more. It required a very compelling reason to spend such sums in war. America didn't enter the last war until she was attacked and forced to fight. What most Americans want now, above everything else, is a long peace in which we can enjoy life. We don't like war."

"But you will have to fight again," my host insisted. "Perhaps it would not have been necessary if the last war had been handled correctly. You must pardon me if I criticize your Roosevelt. Of course he was a very great man, but it would have been much wiser to give less help to Stalin, make him use up his reserves more, and accept the surrender of the German armies on the Western Front before they were destroyed. And it was not necessary to desert Finland. Yes, things might have been different. Now you must pay for these mistakes with another war. The Soviet Union is too powerful."

"I must admit some Americans agree with you," I said, "but the great majority thinks the Soviet Union and Stalin want peace too, and Americans don't want to go to war about ideologies. The Soviet Union suffered very much in this war and they also want peace, a long peace in which to reconstruct their country."

At this my host became quite animated. He leaned forward.

"You make a big mistake when you think the Soviet Union wants peace because she has been weakened in this war. The Soviet Union is not like America. Every Russian is ready to spring to arms at the word of Stalin. They are good soldiers, too. I should know, I fought against them in two wars. Their war material is first class—and I speak not of the Lend-lease material from America but of their own production, which for war seems endless. If you permit them to finish their new Five Year Plan, then God help us all, it will be too late. They will be unconquerable. So, you must fight soon."

"Will you be in the Finnish army again for the third time when the new war comes?"

"I hope not. I expect to be in America before that.

My wife's brother went to America after the first World War. He became a successful manufacturer and this war brought him big orders for airplane parts, in which he has done quite well. He says there is no reason why I cannot be as successful there. No, I hope to be in America and in business by the time war comes again."

Before I could comment my host turned to his short-wave receiving set.

"It's seven o'clock, time for the BBC," he said, handling the dials. From the polished mahogany cabinet came the smooth voice of the announcer:

"This is the British Broadcasting Company. We now continue our series of talks on the British system of higher education. . . ."

I went to bed without listening to the explanation of the British system of higher education, having had little sleep the previous night, and already having learned much from my Finnish host. But I lay awake for many hours, pondering the evening's revelations.

Here, almost within sight of the Soviet border, men who were defeated in two wars within a few years are conspiring feverishly for another war as quickly as possible. They draw their inspiration from Britain and America. They learn to think this war is inevitable and is being prepared by listening to the official short-wave broadcasts about a speech made in the presence of the President of the United States.

This little Finnish local official is by no means the worst example. Personally his main interest is to get away to America. In addition to Spain where fascism remains in power, in Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Germany, the desperate remnants of Nazism and its fifth columns, without any hope of emigrating to America, are nursing the same dreams of war in which, this time, they will be successful because they will have America and the atom bomb on their side. They listen to the same broadcasts; they are already engaged in guerilla warfare and political assassinations which they look upon as preliminary skirmishes of the next war. They observe the international conferences and tell one another that Bevin and Byrnes are fighting on their behalf, that this is why there are such prolonged deadlocks, and why there is no peace in the world. They listen to General Anders, heading the Polish army maintained by the British government, and hear his promises to be back in Warsaw soon to deal with those who dare to be friends of the Soviet Union. They are all sure they will soon receive his or similar help. They receive a daily stream of radio reports from America, revealing a more virulent anti-Soviet campaign here than ever was before. They draw the logical conclusions.

This fifth column of remnants of Nazism, encouraged and supported by Britain and America, is the real "iron curtain" that cuts off Eastern Europe from the west. And by the way, the very expression "iron curtain," as used in America, is itself a sign of anti-Soviet feelings, since it was originated by Herr Goebbels, and later taken up by Churchill to be popularized as the symbol of the split of the victorious Allies—exactly as Hitler had designed and predicted. As long as America takes the remnants of Nazism and its quislings under our pro-

tection, there can be little if any mutual confidence between this country and the Soviet Union.

If we permit the enemies of peace and order to claim with some justification that America is on their side and is preparing war to put them back into power, we cannot expect the Soviet Union to praise us for such work. We must expect exactly the reply we ourselves would give under similar circumstances.

What is "inevitable" about the rapid deterioration of relations between America and the Soviet Union?

It is a rapid change from the days when the Red Army was smashing the Nazi forces in front of Stalingrad! We hailed that victory as the sign of humanity's deliverance from the threat of universal slavery. We spoke of our "friend and ally, the Soviet Union," with real warmth.

Did we not understand then that the victory belonged to the Soviet Union as well as to us? Did we not understand that Stalingrad marked not only the downfall of Hitlerism and the Axis, but that it was also the sign of the emergence of the Soviet Union as a great power alongside the United States? Did we not realize that we would have to live with the Soviet Union as an equal in the new world created by our joint victory over the Axis?

There is nothing inevitable about the deterioration of Soviet-American relations, except that it inevitably results from the new American attitude that denies equality to the Soviet Union in the family of nations.

Franklin D. Roosevelt won the respect, confidence,

and affection of the Soviet people and their leaders by treating them as equals. Once they had learned from experience that Roosevelt held this attitude as a settled policy, the solution of all other problems between the two countries became comparatively easy. I personally met with many spontaneous expressions of this Soviet feeling toward Roosevelt, which colored the Soviet attitude toward all things American. I feel safe in saying that all circles in the Soviet Union, people and leaders, esteemed Roosevelt above any other person outside their own country.

Roosevelt's high prestige in the Soviet Union did not arise from any ideological considerations. They knew quite well that Roosevelt was the foremost representative of the most powerful capitalistic nation—the antithesis of their own socialistic way of life and the most highly developed imperialism according to the Leninist analysis. Yet they acclaimed him. In Roosevelt the Soviet people for the first time in their experience met a leader of a great power who dealt with them honestly and aboveboard as equals. That is the "secret" of the whole question of Soviet-American relations.

Soviet leaders felt a sharp change in America's attitude immediately upon the death of Roosevelt. As who did not? The change was dramatized to the whole world. In San Francisco, at the founding of the United Nations organization, the American delegation openly formed a bloc with the British to override the Soviet views, even in such a morally indefensible move as the admission of Argentina. The San Francisco Conference was saved from wreck only by Truman's last-minute

intervention to attempt to restore, not the Roosevelt spirit and attitude, but the specific agreements which Roosevelt had entered into. But even this was done in a grudging way, like an unwilling submission to the terms of an unprofitable and unfortunate contract by a small merchant determined not to repeat such business. The broad vision of Roosevelt was gone.

The Soviet leaders found the spirit of Roosevelt replaced by the slogan, "Get tough with Russia."

It was from America that the initiative came for the deterioration of our relations with the Soviet Union. This is an inescapable fact which we must recognize if we retain the slightest desire to improve those relations.

During my visit in Moscow I did not get the impression from any source that Soviet leaders regard this present trend as final and irrevocable, despite their disappointment at America's apparent abandonment of Roosevelt's friendly attitude. On the contrary I would interpret the Soviet attitude as one that sees the trend as transitory, as not corresponding to America's own best interests, as the product of obsolete ideological influences rather than of real differences.

Neither could I detect any tendency in Moscow to place the responsibility for this change directly upon President Truman. On the contrary there seemed to be an appreciation of the fact that when Harry Truman had personally intervened in Soviet-American relations the result had been to smooth the road toward agreement and co-operation. The nearest thing to a negative attitude that I could find expressed toward Truman was a questioning one; perhaps his mounting domestic difficulties might make it impossible for him to take command of international relations in the Roosevelt tradition.

There is not in Moscow, of course, any shutting of eyes to the many signs that powerful forces are at work to bring about an Anglo-American war against the Soviet Union. So long as such forces seem to be dictating the trend of events, just so long will the Soviet leaders, in my judgment, remain on the alert; that is, they will "be suspicious," as the American newspapers say. And they will keep their powder dry. They have survived too many attacks to be intimidated by this one.

One of my Soviet friends, trying to explain to himself why America shows at present such callous indifference to Soviet problems of security, said:

> Evidently the American people do not yet understand what war means. Your fighting was all done far from home. You did not witness the razing of your cities to the ground. You do not know what it means to have millions upon millions of civilian casualties. Your population even lived better, on the whole, during the war than it had in the previous ten years. You did not suffer, and you did not even share deeply in the suffering of your own soldiers abroad. That is why you cannot understand our preoccupation with the problem of guarantees that we will not again go through the hell of invasion we have suffered twice in a generation.

I made some small attempt of my own to find out more intimately what Soviet casualty lists meant, beyond the dry tables of statistics. To bring it down to humanly comprehensible terms, I asked an old friend of

mine how many lives were lost in his family during the war. His family, Muscovites for generations and therefore not in the occupied territory, had lost seven out of eleven male members of military age. I went to an apartment house with which I was familiar because two of my sons spent their first years there; every single male of military age in that house had given his life in the defense of Moscow in 1941 and 1942, except one who had been rejected by the army because of t.b.

It is true. We Americans do not know what war means. The Soviet people know, too well. That is one of the reasons why the two nations find it somewhat difficult to understand one another.

I asked one of the leaders of Soviet thought whether the atom bomb was a factor in the deterioration of Soviet-American relations. He answered:

> No, the trouble is not the atom bomb. The trouble is in the influence of the atom bomb on American thinking. We are appalled not by the bomb but by what you say about it.

The war destroyed so much of the old world—the lives of tens of millions of people, houses and industries, ways of life, institutions and traditions, the relations between classes and nations—that it is impossible to dream that it can be restored in anything like its previous form. Out of its ruins there must arise a new and reconstructed world, something better than the old. Only the United States escaped the general devastation, but despite that fact this country finds itself in a new environment and itself changed more fundamentally than we yet realize.

There is certain to be sharp difference of opinion, of course, between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. as to the course and shape of the reconstruction of the world. The fact that such differences exist, and that they are inevitable, is not, however, the crux of our problem. These differences are inherent in all human intercourse. They are only made acute by the enormity of the war's destruction.

The central point of our problem, it seems to me, lies in the fact that the Soviet Union has emerged as one of the two Great Powers, and that the United States (although acutely conscious of its own assumption of such a role) has departed from the Roosevelt policy which accepted the position of the Soviet Union as equally important and decisive.

The recognition and acceptance of the Soviet Union as an equal are the precondition to all wisdom and progress in international relations. Once this fact is accepted, as something we have no ambition to reverse, the ground has been laid for the solution to all the problems of a durable peace.

It is true, of course, that a durable peace is without precedent. This fact is the stock-in-trade of cynics of all brands. There is a certain primitive but powerful logic in the assumption that what has never been in the past cannot be in the future. But that should not be too high a hurdle for American thinking. After all, America herself has broken more than one ancient precedent, and her own rise to a position of world power is not such a

great deal in advance in time of that of the Soviet Union. Both the really Great Powers are themselves unprecedented—they furnish grounds for hope that we may gain an unprecedentedly durable peace.

There *are* new facts in the world. Let us remind ourselves of a few of the most decisive.

(1) There are only two Great Powers, not many as in the past, and they are able, if they can establish a minimum of agreement, to guarantee a peaceful world for some generations.

(2) One of these two Powers is the Soviet Union, a socialistic federation of nations. Whatever the merits of socialism (and the preponderant American opinion is against it), it is a fact that the existence of socialism in the Soviet Union makes for peace, that its basic orientation is toward its own domestic development and, therefore, toward a peaceful world environment.

(3) America, the other Great Power, produced Roosevelt as its greatest, most representative leader, able to win the respect and affection of all peoples including those of the Soviet Union. What America has done before, she can do again.

(4) The atom bomb has not only stimulated adventurist minds to plan a new war, but also has written a warning in letters of fire that such a war may leave behind it only an uninhabited world. War has now reached the goal, toward which it long has moved more slowly, of universal suicide. The menace of such a war, at least as great as the menace of Hitler which cemented our war alliance, is the final argument for peace and cooperation. Only the hopelessly blind can think of the

atom bomb as merely an argument why Mr. Molotov should quickly agree to all the proposals of Mr. Byrnes.

These four new decisive factors in the world define our problem of a durable peace and, like all correct definitions, contain the elements of our answer. If we take all these factors fully into account, then the path to a peaceful world will open up before us.