

People—very often those who were most enthusiastic on agreement with Hitler—now ask "What is the difference between Stalin's Russia and Nazi Germany?" The answer is simple: "There are seven million differences—the seven million Russian dead who lie between Stalingrad and Berlin." The Germans fought in order to conquer Europe and then the world; the Russians fought in order to be left alone—this was, and is, the sole motive of Russian foreign policy.

Don't forget that Russia has been invaded by European Powers three times within 30 years, and each time with the most terrible destruction: the German invasion between 1914 and 1918; the British and French invasions, which were called wars of intervention, between 1918 and 1921; and the second German invasion between 1941 and 1944. Ever since the wars of intervention ended the Russians have been expecting a new aggressive union of the capitalist Powers against them; this is the key to Russian policy. In the mid nineteen-thirties they began to think they had been wrong, that Great Britain and France, being democracies, had some principles after all. Munich and the toleration of Fascist aggression in Spain remove this idea from their minds.

BUT even if the Russians supposed war to be inevitable, they would still not start it off. Conscious of their present weakness, they believe that time is on their side. This expectation of future greatness is a very old element in Russian policy. Only the other day I was reading how the Tsar Nicholas II told the French ambassador in 1914 that 30 years later Russia would have a population of 300,000,000—the actual population of Russia in 1944 was something under 190,000,000. As Pope might have said, Russia "never is, but always to be great." Besides, not only are the Russians confident in their own future, they are equally confident that other countries, which have not got their economic system, are going to run into ever-increasing difficulties. This is the hard core of Russian policy: they look to the future with confidence—whether they are right or not does not matter; all I am concerned with is the effect on their policy. Who dare contemplate the economic future of either Great Britain or the United States with unruffled confidence? If you accept this as the Russian opinion of economic development—as I said, it does not matter whether it is right or not—then you will understand both why Russian policy is not aggressive and why they are so fearful of being attacked by others. War against Russia seems a remote speculation now; it may look very different in a year or two if the capitalist countries—and that means every country associated with the American economic system—if they are ravaged by unemployment, while the Soviet economic system goes from strength to strength. Such a war might give American capitalism a shot in the arm, but it would be the end of this country as a Great Power and indeed it would involve the destruction of most of our population.

IT is the essence of our outlook that war between Russia and the West is not inevitable, and it is equally essential in our outlook that we can find a solution of our economic difficulties without embracing Soviet communism. But our faith—a bit shakily held, but faith

all the same—and our policy are not in line; that is why I believe that present British policy towards Russia is landing us in an impossible position. If war between America and Russia is inevitable, then it should be the object of British policy to keep out of it; if war between America and Russia is not inevitable, then the tendency towards military co-ordination between America and ourselves serves to make it more likely. To claim that we are not committed at present to the United States, to pretend that we treat the Russians as allies in any serious sense, to equate the atomic bomb with the spiritual way of life, this—if I may say so—is a demonstration of the British hypocrisy which has sometimes in the past made us a by-word on the continent of Europe. Applying our principles is not merely a matter of sincerity: it pays when you have principles as sound as I believe our principles of political and social democracy to be. In fact, the advantages of co-operation between Russia and England are so obvious that I am amazed that even the fog of a century of suspicion, thickened up by the smoke of ill-informed anti-Marxism, is enough to keep England and Russia apart. Why, co-operation would be the salvation of us both, and of a good deal of the rest of the world as well.

All the same—and this is a hard thing for me to have to say—I do not believe that close co-operation between Great Britain and Russia on either political or economic matters is possible in the near future. This I say as a matter of honesty and against all my wishes. The Potsdam meeting was a turning-point; till then the great Allies had been drawing gradually together, since then they have been falling apart. That was one of the moments of which Goethe speaks which, once lost, no eternity gives back. It will take perhaps not an eternity, but at any rate a long time, to overcome the suspicions which have been created on both sides by the events of the last eighteen months. The need to co-operate exists; the will to co-operate does not. If you doubt me, ask any Briton serving in Germany about the wall of distrust which he encounters whenever he tries to be friendly with the Russians; and listen also to his own critical and distrustful opinions on the Russians. I do not think this suspicion can be got rid of by either abuse or by flattery; concessions will not remove it, nor will firmness. It can only be removed by events, by the inexorable pressure of circumstances forcing us together. And all the time the penalties which both countries pay for not co-operating are increasing. In 1938, before Munich, Great Britain and Russia could have worked together to stop Hitler; they did not and the penalty for both was the second German war. In 1945 co-operation with Russia would have led the way to a much more rapid economic recovery in Russia, in Great Britain, and throughout the world. As it is, both countries, and much of the rest of the world as well, will have to pass through many harsh experiences before they learn the lesson that Anglo-Russian co-operation is essential for economic stability and the political Balance of Power. But soon or late, events will force us to it; the only possible policy—if I have carried you with me so far—by which this country can remain prosperous and a Great Power, is the policy of the Anglo-Russian alliance.

WARNING

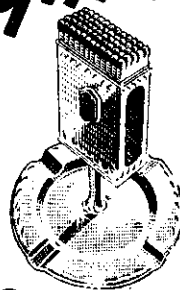
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