

*The Era of Acceptance*

IT IS, TO REPEAT, UNJUSTIFIABLE TO DEFINE A NATIONAL foreign policy, at any given moment, as either "good" or "evil". These absolute human standards are simply not applicable to "the governmental conduct of the relations of one sovereignty to others in a world of conflicting states." One does not say that the policy of a Post Office Department is right or wrong and moral criteria are even less appropriate in the case of a Foreign Office.

There are, however, more mundane standards by which the conduct of a Foreign Office can be measured, and must be measured in any country where the responsibility of the governors to the governed is explicit, as under the Constitution of the United States. It can and should be asked whether the foreign policy is *legal*, meaning does it comply with constitutional requirements. Further important questions are: is foreign policy *efficient*, in its necessarily continuous endeavor to obtain national security? Is it *economical*, in attaining that objective at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer? Is it *logical*, in the sense of having continuity of purpose and presenting a comprehensible pattern to which all aspects of the policy conform? Is it *popular*, meaning does the policy respond to, or at least not actively violate, the instincts of the people? At that point ethics does enter

the foreign policy picture, as an influence that is naturally most pronounced under representative government.

In applying these criteria to the post-war foreign policy of the United States it is necessary to bear in mind the principles that controlled prior to the war. To assist understanding of the evolution of American foreign policy, the major historical landmarks have been recalled. Of course this review is only a fragment of the entire diplomatic history of the United States. But the part selected gives, it is believed, an accurate idea of the whole.

More extended analysis would only confirm the evidence that American foreign policy until the war with Spain was predominantly negative. The isolationist attitude that controlled during the early days of the Republic has maintained almost surprising strength as the small agrarian nation consolidated, expanded, and became the greatest industrial empire the world has ever seen. The organ of central government assigned to conduct negotiations with other sovereignties was originally called the Department of State in part because of popular mistrust of "foreign affairs." It is not merely inertia that keeps this inappropriate nomenclature. More votes would probably be lost than gained, by any Administration that formally proposed an outright "Foreign Office."

Nevertheless, the government of the United States has from the outset been engaged in complicated and often delicate negotiations with other governments. In spite of its fortunate geographic location, in the days of sail, the security of the Republic from external pressures could never be taken for granted. Consequently American diplomacy has always had a positive content, in spite of its

predominantly negative character. It has also, until recent times, been continuously subject to popular criticism, often ill-informed and sometimes spiteful, yet on the whole successful in that major decisions made in the face of opposition have always received subsequent popular support.

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THE POSITIVE content of American foreign policy, since the War of 1812, has taken the form of a continuous working agreement with Great Britain, natural because of the strength of the English cultural heritage in this country; natural also because of very important economic ties and because the long northern frontier of the Republic marches with a great British Dominion which has strongly and beneficially influenced Anglo-American relations. It has further been natural for Americans to favor the British Empire above any other, for after all it was that Empire which laid the groundwork for the United States.

Continuously, however, the American people have also been affected by a heritage of antipathy as well as one of admiration for the "Mother Country". The Federal form of government adopted here was, with its balanced powers, fundamentally different from that of England. In spite of a common language the type of civilization that was developed, even before the Revolution, had far more

variation from than kinship with the English social pattern. For "patriotic" reasons, ancient grievances have been kept alive, and evenly grossly exaggerated, in American schools. Irish and German loyalties, often antagonistic to Britain, have played a considerable part.

As a result of this interplay of forces Anglo-American relationships long remained a mere collaborative arrangement, far less formal in character than that legal alliance which would have been anathema to the original, self-reliant American political creed. Many aspects of British foreign policy have always been viewed with mistrust, whether or not justifiably so, by the American public as a whole. And it was not until Britain's world position was seriously threatened—in 1917—that the United States went to war as an ally, even then maintaining rather fatuously that we were merely an "associated power".

There is no doubt that World War I was one of the great divides of history. Among other effects it terminated the British balance of power system. In place of this, under American leadership, was developed the theory of "collective security". A resurgence of isolationism—the natural swing of the political pendulum—then kept the United States out of the League of Nations, although this was the instrumentality designed to develop collective security. So it came to be reasoned by interventionist Americans that the League failed because of United States abstention.

This conclusion was necessarily hypothetical, with as much evidence con as pro. But it unquestionably strengthened the national resolve to build a second League of Nations, centered around American participa-

tion, at the close of World War II. To accomplish this purpose it seemed desirable to silence all proponents of the traditional isolationist attitude, a dubious procedure which could be made to seem laudable because those with isolationist leanings were for that very reason skeptics about the constructive accomplishments of the war. Anxiety over this skepticism, even when repressed, helps to account for the mystical, indeed almost hysterical, faith in the United Nations as a panacea.

The net result of this emotional yearning was to throw all practical diplomatic considerations to the wind during and immediately after the course of the hostilities. On the bland assumption that U.N. was destined to bring perpetual peace the United States committed a whole series of colossal blunders, over and above that of Yalta. Outstanding items in the series were:

(1) The failure to take any precautions against the obvious long-range designs of the Russian Communist Government, in spite of numerous frank official Russian statements as to the actual character of Moscow's post-war aims.

(2) The insistence on the "unconditional surrender" of Germany, creating a political vacuum for Communism to fill, and nullifying all the constructive effort of the many German leaders who so courageously sponsored the non-Communist anti-Nazi movement.

(3) The arrangement to let Russia occupy the great Central European industrial centers of Silesia, Saxony and Bohemia, placing their equipment, skilled workmen and scientific personnel under Communist control.

(4) The decision to isolate both Berlin and Vienna

from any land contact with the Western occupation zones.

(5) The Morgenthau Plan for reducing Western Germany to pastoral status, implemented by the dismantling of its steel, chemical, aluminum, electrical, shipbuilding, watchmaking and other industries—a program of planned destruction which played directly into Russian hands.

(6) The ban on restoration of the Japanese merchant marine, and the doctrinaire fragmentation of that nation's economy, which with Japan's territorial losses insured pauperism for the overcrowded islands. It is now known that except for General MacArthur's enlightened attitude, the post-war destruction of the Japanese economy would have been carried to even greater lengths.

(7) The "permission" given Russia to occupy and communize Korea down to the 38th Parallel, in addition to all the advantages given the Kremlin at Yalta and in return for less than one week of Russian military help against Japan.

Such a series of foreign policy blunders would have been far less likely if Congress had asserted its prerogative in this field, or even if there had been frank and open public discussion of issues as they arose. But the theory that all criticism should be stifled, that "papa knows best", held almost undisputed sway.

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DURING THE WAR against the Axis, any forthright criticism of President Roosevelt's personal diplomacy was probably too much to expect. The European struggle was successfully depicted as one in which the very existence of the United States was at stake. Today most Americans would agree that this was gross exaggeration. By comparison with Soviet Russia's admitted objectives the most audacious territorial ambitions of Hitler, Mussolini and even Tojo in retrospect seem almost modest. There is no documentary evidence that any of these three ever had any designs of conquest in either North or South America.

Some thoughtful Americans, prior to Pearl Harbor, risked contumely, insult and well-organized defamation to point out that the traditional interests of their Republic lay in observing strict neutrality between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia. As Herbert Hoover said on June 29, 1941, war between these equally vicious dictatorships indicated their mutual enfeeblement to the stage where both:

“. . . will be sufficiently exhausted to listen to the military, economic and moral powers of the United States and at that moment and that moment only can the United States promote a just and lasting peace.”

Such a policy of armed and watchful waiting would then have upheld every historical tenet of American for-

ign policy. We could have fed and supplied Great Britain, under the doctrine of the Freedom of the Seas. We could have aided Chiang Kai-shek and upheld the Open Door against Japanese pressure perhaps more successfully by reason of being neutral in Continental Europe. If necessary to save the British Empire, we could have fought Japan alone, as Russia cannily fought Germany alone until Japan was on the verge of surrender.

Such a policy was indeed implied by the Monroe Doctrine, the reciprocal nature of which has already been emphasized. Only the American pledge not to intervene in European quarrels had justified the warning to European Powers against intervention on the American Continent.

But all that is now water over the dam. The fact is that the nation as a whole willingly accepted the personal diplomacy of President Roosevelt. Indeed there is evidence to show that this President did not, at the outset of the war, wish to accept the *carte blanche* in the conduct of foreign policy extended to him. If there was executive usurpation of power it was certainly made easy by the general impairment and supine surrender of the national critical faculty.

Less than two months after the speech by Mr. Hoover quoted above, on August 12, 1941, in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, in behalf of their respective governments signed the declaration that came to be known as the Atlantic Charter. That was, in effect, both a proclamation of Anglo-American alliance and an American declaration of war against Germany, although under the



Constitution of the United States not binding on this country in either respect without Congressional approval.

Winston Churchill's memoirs of World War II provide what must be regarded as an authoritative account of this extraordinary action. The British Prime Minister tells <sup>1</sup> of the first suggestion for the meeting, from Harry Hopkins "in late July." Mr. Churchill then reveals that he and not Mr. Roosevelt drafted the declaration, saying: "I am glad it should be of record that the substance and spirit of what came to be called the Atlantic Charter was in its first draft a British production cast in my own words." He tells how he prevailed on Mr. Roosevelt to make "commitments" that no American President had the Constitutional right to undertake. Then, in a characteristically cutting phrase, Churchill concludes:

"The fact alone of the United States, still technically neutral, joining with a belligerent Power in making such a declaration was astonishing."

Yet the decline of the American critical faculty had gone so far that only a small minority of our native commentators saw anything "astonishing" in what immediately impressed an English politician as such.

<sup>1</sup> Winston Churchill: *The Grand Alliance* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company; 1950), pp. 427-444.

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IT HAS BEEN ASSERTED that President Roosevelt himself did not anticipate that Congress would so readily abdicate its Constitutional right and responsibility to check and supervise the course of foreign policy.

Winston Churchill says that in the discussions of his draft Atlantic Charter, Mr. Roosevelt at first spoke for something much less formal and far-reaching. "The President explained that his idea was . . . a short statement to the effect that . . . these naval and military conversations had in no way been concerned with future commitments other than as authorized by Act of Congress."<sup>2</sup>

Although Mr. Roosevelt let himself be persuaded into overstepping his prerogative at Placentia Bay he later demonstrated on several occasions that he was not unaware of the Constitutional limits on his executive power.

On December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, Mr. Roosevelt "arose at dawn" to complete his message to Congress asking for a declaration of war against Japan. That brief statement, delivered to a joint session of both Houses, could be subject to no criticism from the viewpoint of legality. The President reported that "As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense." He said: "hostilities exist". But, in strict conformity with Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution Mr. Roosevelt concluded:

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 436.

"I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday December 7th, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."

Similarly, two years later, Mr. Roosevelt made clear that in his mind the Cairo Declaration, of December 1, 1943, was for the United States merely a statement of executive intent, having no binding force unless and until embodied in a treaty of peace, which of course requires Senate ratification. At Cairo it was agreed by Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-shek that all territory "stolen" from China by Japan, including Manchuria and Formosa, would be restored to the Nationalist Chinese Government. It was further declared at Cairo that: "In due course, Korea shall become free and independent."

These executive arrangements were wholly within the framework of the Open Door and our traditional Far Eastern policy. As such they would doubtless have received hearty Congressional support. But the President properly did not take this for granted. He did not suggest that the political agreements made at Cairo, and immediately afterwards with Stalin at Teheran, were anything more than provisional and tentative.

On the contrary, reporting to Congress on January 11, 1944, Mr. Roosevelt assured the Senate that it would have the last word as to both Cairo and Teheran. The President then said he was "thoroughly conversant with the provisions of our Constitution." He said that, in his capacity as Commander in Chief, he had certainly made "very large and very specific military plans." Immedi-

ately he added: "But there were no secret treaties or political or financial commitments."

Indeed the complete fluidity of the Cairo Declaration, in its political aspects, was painfully emphasized by President Roosevelt himself at Yalta, little more than a year later. By this executive agreement of February 11, 1945, with no Chinese representative present, Soviet Russia was given certain "pre-eminent" rights in Mongolia and Manchuria. This greatly weakened the prestige of the Chinese Nationalists, who at Cairo had been given assurance of the restoration of Manchuria with no strings attached. Furthermore, as already noted, the Yalta Agreement was completely at variance with the Open Door policy. It transferred to Russia, without Chinese knowledge, the same special privileges on Chinese soil that we had resisted when they were exacted by Japan.

Nevertheless, President Roosevelt knew that the political arrangements made "by me" at Yalta were *ultra vires* and he was clearly worried about it when he reported on some—by no means all—of the deal in his last message to Congress, on March 1, 1945. He said: "Unless you here in the halls of the American Congress—with the support of the American people—concur in the decisions reached at Yalta, and give them your active support, the meeting will not have produced lasting results."

And then, a little later in the same message: "As you know, I have always been a believer in the document called the Constitution of the United States . . . I am well aware of the Constitutional fact" that political arrangements made at Yalta "must be approved by two-thirds of the Senate of the United States."

But this scrapping of the Open Door policy has never been approved by, or even submitted to, the Senate. It stands on the books as irrefutable evidence of the surrender of control over the conduct of their foreign policy by the people of the United States. And the record further shows that this surrender went far beyond the expectation of a President who had few inhibitions about the usurpation of power.

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WITH THE DEATH of President Roosevelt, and the immediately subsequent collapse first of German and then of Japanese military resistance, the Department of State was confronted with an unprecedented and highly disconcerting situation. We had won the war. But not even those in nominal charge of foreign policy knew about all the mortgages held by the Kremlin.

A major part of the responsibility for auditing the books fell on James F. Byrnes, who was appointed Secretary of State, succeeding Edward R. Stettinius, on July 3, 1945. "Jimmy" Byrnes had been at Yalta, as an adviser to President Roosevelt, but as he has wryly written: "It was not until some time after I became Secretary of State that a news story from Moscow caused me to inquire and learn of the full agreement." He simply did not know "how many IOU's were outstanding."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> James F. Byrnes: *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers; 1947), p. 43.

At the Potsdam Conference, convened immediately after the Byrnes appointment, both the magnitude of Mr. Roosevelt's personal commitments, and the intention of Stalin to hold the United States to full accountability for them, began to be apparent. One way to confront the awkward situation, of which the American people were almost wholly unaware, was to conceal it so far as possible under the cloak of a "bipartisan foreign policy".

Such a policy had been taken for granted during the war. Because of the nature of the aftermath it seemed essential to prevent any outbreak of pent-up criticism from Congress. As former Senators, both President Truman and Secretary Byrnes were well qualified to appeal for Congressional tolerance and support. In this connection a particular play was made to Senator Arthur Vandenberg, the ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Mr. Byrnes also put through the appointment of Senator Warren R. Austin, Vermont Republican, as head of the American delegation to the newly-formed United Nations.

As an opiate, the bipartisan policy worked well. It was for some time successful in preventing any serious Republican criticism, or any real public understanding, of the very uncomfortable post-war position of the United States. Senator Vandenberg did plaintively observe that a bipartisan foreign policy "should participate in the take-offs as well as the crash landings". The first serious rift in the lute, however, came not from the opposition, but from a fellow Cabinet member of Secretary Byrnes. On September 12, 1946, at Madison Square Garden, Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace attacked Mr. Byrnes

as not being sufficiently conciliatory to the Soviet Union. Shortly thereafter Mr. Wallace left the Cabinet.

Mr. Byrnes himself withdrew as Secretary of State on January 20, 1947 and was succeeded in that office by General George C. Marshall, who had then just returned from his assignment as special representative of the President to China. In that capacity General Marshall had implemented the policy of undermining Chiang Kai-shek, as initiated in the Far East Division of the Department of State.

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IN HIS revealing memoirs, *Speaking Frankly*, former Secretary Byrnes gives background on the unsuccessful Marshall Mission. He says:

“Before Ambassador Hurley’s resignation, the State Department had prepared a statement of policy on China, the first draft of which I showed the Ambassador a few days before he resigned. As soon as President Truman appointed General Marshall his personal representative in China, I asked the General to study the draft so that he could help prepare the final statement for presentation to the President.”<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Byrnes then tells of the agreement reached by himself, Under Secretary Acheson and General Marshall

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 226. Cf. also Freda Utley: *The China Story* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company; 1951), Ch. I.

“upon the statement of policy that subsequently was approved by the President and released to the public on December 15 [1945]. Thereafter the President made no change in that policy except upon the recommendation of General Marshall or with his approval.”

In this “statement of policy”, drafted in the Far Eastern Division of the Department of State, President Truman said: “The United States . . . believes that peace, unity and democratic reform in China will be furthered if the basis of this Government is broadened to include other political elements in the country.”

Foremost among these “other political elements” were the Chinese Communists. Chiang Kai-shek was pressured by the United States to co-operate with them at the same time that the French and Italian governments were expelling Communists from their Cabinets. The Chinese Nationalists might well have been overthrown by the Reds in any case. But the Chiang Kai-shek regime was the more completely demoralized by the strange American requirement that it form a virtual partnership with Moscow as a condition of continued assistance from the United States.

Criticism of the State Department’s pro-Communist policy in China was for a time met with vague rebuttal about a “China Lobby”. But the evidence was too glaring to be suppressed by this or other counter-charges concerning real or alleged corruption in the entourage of the Nationalist Generalissimo. Bipartisanship could not stand the mounting strain, as was demonstrated when four Republican members of the Senate Foreign Relations Com-



mittee,<sup>5</sup> on August 13, 1950, issued a statement asserting that: "Our Far Eastern Policy . . . consistently temporized with and capitulated to the ruthless demands of the Communists, dominated by Moscow. . . . This was never a bipartisan policy. It was solely an Administration policy."

A year prior to this political rupture the Department of State had sought to avert it by issuing, in August, 1949, a comprehensive "White Book" on the relations of the United States with China. The letter of transmittal to President Truman was signed by Dean Acheson, who had succeeded General Marshall as Secretary of State in January of 1949. Mr. Acheson's letter concluded with the statement that the Far Eastern policy of the United States "will continue to be based upon . . . our traditional support for the Open Door and for China's independence and administrative and territorial integrity."

By August, 1949, however, it was no longer possible to conceal the fact that the Open Door policy had been scrapped at Yalta and that the Chinese "agrarian reformers" were in close co-operation with Moscow. If further evidence were needed the White Paper provided it by giving documentation<sup>6</sup> on the State Department's complete failure to get any formal assurances from Stalin "affirming respect for the Open Door policy".

In retrospect it can be seen that this White Paper—the black background which the document at least

<sup>5</sup> Wiley, Alexander Smith, Hickenlooper, and Lodge. Senator Vandenberg, though absent because of illness, recorded himself "in general agreement."

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 118-20.

partially revealed—really broke the log-jam previously maintained by the “bipartisan” foreign policy. From coast to coast a chorus of protest welled up against the Administration’s obvious animus towards Chiang Kai-shek, its open encouragement to the Chinese Communists; its seeming indifference to the fate of Formosa and Korea.

The known facts inevitably encouraged rumors exaggerating actual evidence as to Communist infiltration of the Department of State and other key governmental agencies. Then open aggression across the 38th Parallel by well-armed North Korean Communists, on June 25, 1950, forced the Administration to change its policy overnight, to take the lead in invoking collective action by the United Nations in Korea, and independently to defend in Formosa the remnants of the Chiang regime that it had been vociferously denouncing as both “reactionary” and “corrupt”.<sup>7</sup>

The unforeseen consequences of the Yalta Agreement strengthened opposition to Administration candidates in the 1950 Congressional elections and thereby helped to bring the tragic era of bipartisan foreign policy to an end.

<sup>7</sup> For documentation, v. *United States Policy in the Korean Crisis*, Dept. of State Publication No. 3922.