

Betwixt and Between ...

Mesamarat al-Gayb, 6 January 1946

The world was genuinely, deeply afraid when the London meeting failed, that autumn; the world then found some measure of reassurance when the Moscow meeting succeeded, at the start of winter; and now the world has returned to its own anxiety, or anxiety has returned to the world, with scarcely a few days having passed since the Moscow meeting itself.

What all of this means is that the world remains genuinely torn between fear and reassurance, between despair and hope — and that this same turmoil is itself a constitutive feature of international life, indeed of all human life, until matters finally settle, one day, should matters even be destined to settle at all, after this formidable war.

It is not, after all, so very much to ask that the world remain anxious and unsettled for a year or two, after a genuinely terrible war lasting six full years. I believe the world could genuinely thank God for its own deliverance, should it manage to secure real stability within a year or two of this second war's own conclusion — a war that shook the lives of all people, violently, in politics, economics, and social institutions alike, indeed in their own very judgment and evaluation of things.

What matters is not knowing whether the time the world will spend in this same turmoil proves long or short — what matters, rather, is discerning the causes and reasons behind this same turmoil, and then confirming, afterward — if anything in this life can truly be confirmed at all — that the world will not be driven into a third war before it has been granted some reasonable measure of rest.

It was already well known that the most significant apparent reason behind the Foreign Ministers' own failure, when they met in London, lay in the Russians' own insistence on holding firm to the decisions reached at the Crimea and at Potsdam — decisions requiring the victors alone to monopolize everything, with France and China relegated to a secondary rank beneath these same victors, sharing in some matters, turned away from others, and states ranked thereafter in tiers and stations, one above another.

The British and Americans attempted to involve France and China in every outward aspect of the whole matter, hoping their own involvement might help soften the sheer intensity of Russia's own great influence — but gained nothing whatsoever from it. The delegates simply dispersed, having accomplished nothing, some of them scheming against others, openly at times, secretly at others. It became clear to them, then, that matters could not proceed, nor be set right, along these same lines of dispute and scheming, and they found themselves compelled to resume their meeting in Moscow, this time without France or China present at all — hoping that, once left alone together, they might reach some agreement, complete or partial. And they did meet, and did discuss, and did reach agreement, exactly as our own Prime Minister put it — though only on some matters, not on others.

Bismarck, it is said, once likened the Ottoman state to an artichoke, never eaten all at once, but leaf by leaf. It appears the victors have returned to Bismarck's own method here, likening the very subject of their own disagreement to an artichoke, eating it leaf by leaf, or resolving it bit by bit.

There is no doubt whatsoever that they, at their own meeting in Moscow, did eat some of this same artichoke's leaves, and did resolve some of their own complicated affairs' own problems — growing genuinely optimistic, genuinely delighted — and the world joined them, too, in that same optimism and delight.

It is genuinely useful to know exactly which of the artichoke's own leaves they ate, and to identify exactly which problems they resolved, or came close to resolving.

The first among these problems is the very question of upholding the decisions reached at the Crimea and at Potsdam — a problem resolved, or very nearly resolved, in a genuinely remarkable fashion, one in which the Russians achieved a genuinely comprehensive victory: China was excluded from taking part in European affairs entirely, and France was excluded from taking part in Balkan affairs. China accepted her own allotted share; France wavered between acceptance and resentment — though she will find herself compelled, in the end, to accept it, since she would need to possess strength and might genuinely sufficient to back up her own resentment with force of arms, and remains, still, a very long way from that.

And so Europe was left to the Europeans; Finland was left to the Russians and the British, the Americans excluded; the Balkan states were left to the three great powers, France excluded; and Italy, Germany, and Austria were left to the three great powers, together with France this time.

This is no small matter — the victors, after all, ought to set their own house in order, as the saying goes, before setting their own affairs in order across the seas. Nor is it a small matter that the victors should reach some agreement whatsoever on European affairs, after having agreed on nothing at all — the Moscow meeting has granted them the chance to take a short step, yet a genuine step, nonetheless, toward real accord.

There is a second problem they managed to resolve, or came close to genuinely attempting to resolve: the problem of British and American recognition of the Balkan governments. These same governments had fallen under absolute Russian influence, and the Western Allies refused to recognize them, since they submitted to the communist system to a greater degree than seemed proper. They have now managed to find a way out of this same predicament: the Russians agreed that moderate democratic parties should receive some representation, however genuinely minimal, in these same governments, and the Western Allies agreed to recognize these governments once that same representation was actually achieved — then set about genuinely assisting Russia in achieving it.

The victors may well encounter, here or there, some obstacle troubling this same agreement — France, for instance, might resist, though she will soften in the end... The unruly peoples of the Balkans, too, might resist, but the Russians will manage to persuade them toward flexibility, until matters settle. There remains another problem the Allies have not openly declared themselves to have resolved, or to be on the verge of resolving — but everything suggests they are genuinely working toward exactly this same resolution.

This fascist state standing in the westernmost reaches of Europe — even as dictatorship has already collapsed everywhere else — ought not to be left standing, in open defiance of victorious democracy. People know full well there exist no political ties whatsoever between Russia and Spain, while political ties genuinely persist between the Western Allies and General Franco's own government — and this same contradiction

among the victors will inevitably have to be resolved.

It was, after all, the necessities of war that compelled the Western Allies to conciliate General Franco, so long as he maintained his own neutrality, however genuinely suspect that same neutrality was. But now that the war has ended, its own manoeuvring concluded, and democracy has triumphed everywhere — this same defiance ought not to be allowed to persist; the very least the victors could do, all of them together, is sever their own relations with General Franco, compelling Spain to revive democratic rule upon her own soil.

In this way, European policy is coordinated, points of view drawn closer together, and Europe, in some measure genuinely united, becomes capable of confronting the world's own other problems, led by the great victors toward subduing the weaker, smaller nations. The great victors, as you can see, have neither reached full agreement, nor fallen into full disagreement — they remain, rather, genuinely betwixt and between!

Europe, too, as you can see, is neither fully secure, nor fully afraid... neither fully despairing, nor fully hopeful — she remains, rather, genuinely betwixt and between.

The great victors managed to resolve other problems too, beyond Europe, since resolving them had become genuinely unavoidable — though they resolved none of them completely, nor left any of them in quite the same state of complexity they had once found them in; they arrived, rather, at something genuinely betwixt and between. They reorganized oversight of Japan, for instance, in a manner that satisfies the Russians only partially, and angers the Americans only partially — a genuinely betwixt-and-between arrangement, increasing Russian influence while still preserving General MacArthur's own full authority intact.

They very nearly managed to reconcile Russian and American interests in China too, at least for a stated period. What matters, though, is not that problems be resolved decisively — what matters, rather, is that a start be made toward resolving them, and that the Allies arrive at some genuinely betwixt-and-between position.

They have arrived, too, at an agreement over Korea, making her an independent state resembling a colony, and a colony resembling an independent state — belonging neither entirely to herself alone, nor entirely to any other single power among the victors, but standing,

rather, genuinely between the two, for a stated, known period.

If the American Secretary of State feels genuine delight, the British Foreign Secretary genuine satisfaction, and the Russian Foreign Minister genuine good cheer, then all three are entirely within their own right to feel delighted, satisfied, and cheerful — having emerged, after all, from that same state of stagnation and paralysis they were forced into that autumn, into something of real movement and activity, driven toward it, this time, in winter.

But the American Secretary of State had scarcely arrived back in Washington before he faced genuinely severe criticism. Nor did his own British colleague fare any better — public opinion stood genuinely indignant in America, genuinely anxious in Great Britain. This, too, is something entirely natural, nothing strange in it at all: Russia, after all, triumphed to a genuinely considerable degree at the Moscow meeting, and it is only natural that conservatives and moderates alike, in both America and Great Britain, should find that genuinely difficult to accept.

The Moscow meeting, though, was unable to resolve two other problems, whether completely or even approximately — the problems of Iran and Turkey. Iran holds the sources of petroleum; Turkey holds the very key to the eastern Mediterranean — small wonder, then, that conservatives and moderates in America and Western Europe alike should grow genuinely pessimistic. As for the Iranians and Turks themselves, their own matter is far too trivial to warrant real concern, far too insignificant to merit real attention... The Iranians may well grow genuinely weary of these same problems arising from the victors' own rivalry over their own homeland, the very land they live in, and their own wealth, the very source of their own livelihood — but this is nothing of any real significance, since Iranian satisfaction and Iranian resentment amount to exactly the same thing; what matters, rather, is that the victors reach agreement on Iranian affairs, whether or not Iran herself agrees with them on her own affairs.

Say the same of the Turks: they may well grow angry, or grow content; they may well show themselves ready for war, or ready for peace — but what matters, all the same, is that the victors reach agreement among themselves.

For this very reason, two genuinely valuable ideas have appeared in the world's own atmosphere: the first, the idea of a three-power commission, sent to Iran to investigate, and then advise — not the

Iranians, but the victors themselves.

Mr. Bevin wanted to prove a genuinely gracious companion, negotiating with Iran's own government over sending this same commission to her own country — but it is said Comrade Molotov refused even this small measure of graciousness, insisting on nothing but sheer bluntness instead. Iranian affairs, it would seem, concern the victors far more than they concern the Iranians themselves!

The second idea, one that has only just begun appearing, in these very last moments, is that negotiation might resolve the dispute between the Russians and the Turks — and negotiation involves genuine give and take, with it being entirely clear the Russians will give nothing whatsoever, and will remain satisfied only once they have taken something.

It stands entirely natural that this same idea should have come from the victors themselves — and who knows? The British and Americans might well prove a genuine, benevolent intermediary between the Turks and the Russians: should the Turks accept their own counsel, Russia would grow satisfied, and Turkey would content herself with whatever has been decreed for her, and against her; should the Turks reject this same counsel, they would simply be left alone to face the Russians, and try their own luck — the outcome of that same trial being already well known, beyond any doubt whatsoever.

You might well ask, too, about the affairs of the Arab East — what became of them, amid all these same discussions raised in Moscow, and still being raised in the three great capitals? The answer to this question is genuinely simple: the Arab East ranks as the very last thing anyone gives any thought to — though the victors have certainly not forgotten it, and could never possibly forget it, since it holds interests and assets no one could ever genuinely afford to forget.