

*Foster Rhea Dulles*

# THE ROAD TO TEHERAN



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# The Road to Teheran

THE STORY OF RUSSIA  
AND AMERICA, 1781-1943

by  
Foster Rhea Dulles

OVERSEAS EDITIONS, Inc.  
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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to trace the relations between the people of the United States and the people of Russia from the early days of American independence to those of the common association of the two nations in the world struggle against Nazi Germany. It makes no claim whatsoever to being a definitive survey of the immensely broad subject with which it deals. It is rather an attempt to record the salient features in the past history of Russian-American relations as they may influence or affect the efforts that are being made today to discover an enduring basis for understanding and good will between Russia and America.

The account is necessarily written from an American point of view. It is based upon American sources. Whatever material was available on how Russia has interpreted her policy toward the United States, or on what the Russian people have thought of this country, was carefully used. But it must be admitted from the onset that American policy toward Russia, and the reaction of the American public to developments both in Czarist Russia and Communist Russia, provide the book's principal theme.

Bibliographical sources for this book include the available official documents; the diaries, memoirs and other records of those who have played a significant role in Russian-American relations; contemporary comment on things Russian as found in newspapers and magazines during the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century, and a wealth of special monographic material.

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# I

## THE COMMON CAUSE

THE United States and Russia have been at peace throughout their common history of more than a century and a half. Even though there have been periods of marked friction between the two nations, and at the close of the first World War we found ourselves, however reluctantly, intervening in Russia's affairs, it is still true that over a long period of time Russian-American relations have been generally friendly. The United States has taken up arms against every other major power. If the record is carried back to the eighteenth century, we find that we became engaged in a flare-up of naval warfare against France in the late 1790's; something more than a decade later we fought England in the War of 1812, and more recently the great world struggles of the twentieth century have drawn us into conflict with Germany, Italy and Japan. So too has Russia at one time or another during these years been at war with each of these great powers. The peoples of Russia and America have fought together as allies; never as declared enemies.

Chance is not responsible for this long record of peaceful relations, nor is it entirely the fact of geographical separation. The objectives of trade and commerce, and the foreign policies of the two nations, have generally run along parallel lines. Their interests have been very much the same and threats to those interests have arisen in the same quarters. In the nineteenth century a common rivalry with Great Britain drew the United States and Russia together, and in the twentieth century the direct challenge of Germany and Japan has made them close allies.

The fundamental objective of their foreign policies, moreover, has been the maintenance of peace. There have been occasions when imperialism appeared to overshadow such a goal. Russia has had her expansive ambitions and the American people have not always restrained their acquisitive instincts. But more generally both countries have sought national security rather than

foreign conquest or colonial possessions. Thomas Jefferson once declared that Russia and America, essentially pacific in character and practice, had a common cause in upholding the rights of all peaceable nations. His words were echoed by Franklin D. Roosevelt when he received the first ambassador of Soviet Russia to the United States. "A deep love of peace," he stated upon that occasion, "is the common heritage of the people of both our countries."

The vast extent and great natural riches of the territories of the United States and Russia are the primary factor behind their emphasis upon national security rather than overseas empire. Boundless areas of plain and forest, fertile river valleys and broad prairies, are their common possession. No other country has such untold resources in arable lands, forest reserves, oil deposits and mineral wealth as have both Russia and America. The settling of these far-reaching expanses of territory and the development of these illimitable resources have been a constant challenge to their peoples and have in large part served to absorb their energies.

The frontier has played a major role in their respective histories, placing its stamp upon national character, while in more recent years industrial development has served to open in each nation new vistas of national progress. Russia and America have always looked to the future, for it has always been big with promise, and their people have shared a sturdy confidence, a sense of inherent power, that have often impressed foreign visitors. "There are at present two great nations in the world," Tocqueville wrote a century ago, "which seem to tend towards the same end, although they start from different points. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. . . . Their starting point is different and their courses are not the same, yet each of them appears to be marked by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe."

Their similarities in background and character have caused the American and Russian people to have a marked interest in one another despite the fact that their countries are upon opposite sides of the world and direct contacts have always been extremely rare. From the days when Alexander I studied the



American constitution to those in which the leaders of the Soviet Union have paid such flattering attention to our industrial development, the people of Russia have again and again looked across the Atlantic with wonder and admiration at what was happening in the United States. "We never forget that America is a capitalist country," Stalin has declared. "But we respect American efficiency in industry, technique, literature and life."

The American people have always been strangely fascinated by Russia. Even when we have understood her least, or have been appalled by developments that we could not reconcile with our own philosophy, the fascination has still been there. Henry Adams once wrote that "Russia was the most indigestible morsel he ever met." Many Americans have felt even more keenly that this vast country was an enigma they could never hope to fathom. But it nevertheless remains true that as a nation we have always had sympathy and friendship for a people with whom we have somehow felt strangely akin.

A land of snow and ice, of long cold winters, of limitless steppes, of frozen tundras—Holy Russia or Communist Russia, what has this great country really meant to Americans? It has meant many things, at different times and to different people. Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, the Crimean War, the Bear That Walks Like a Man, Port Arthur and the Japanese fleet, Ten Days That Shook the World, the Third International, the defense of Moscow and battle of Stalingrad are chapters in an historic drama whose long unfolding we have always watched with absorption. St. Petersburg—Petrograd—Leningrad; the Volga, mother of rivers; the forbidding walls of the Kremlin; the great industrial cities of the Urals, have each in turn stood for Russia in the popular imagination. For some Americans Tolstoi's magnificent *War and Peace* has symbolized Russia, but for others it has been represented by the gigantic Dnieprostroy Dam, or perhaps the Red Terror and the extermination of the Kulaks. Again, the spirit of Russia has been found in the Moscow Art Theatre, hard-riding Cossacks, the knout and exile to Siberia, ikons, Nijinsky and the ballet, Dostoevsky, nihilism, the music of Tchaikovsky. . . .

The imagination of America has been caught by the great fig-

ures who have played their part on the Russian stage: the proud, imperious Catherine who kept our envoy waiting at her doorstep but commissioned John Paul Jones as an admiral in her fleet; Alexander I who corresponded with Jefferson, walked and talked with John Quincy Adams, and created the Holy Alliance to establish peace throughout the world; Alexander II who won the name of Liberator for freeing the serfs at the same time that Lincoln the Emancipator was freeing American slaves; and finally Nicholas II, paying the final penalty for the sins of autocracy, caught in the web of intrigue woven by the Czarina and the sinister Rasputin. Americans have also followed the dramatic careers of the more recent statesmen of Russia: the unlucky Kerensky, seeking to uphold democracy with endless and ineffectual talk; Lenin, ruthless, determined, inspired; the perennial revolutionary Trotsky; and Stalin . . . what may one say of Stalin? A symbol of cold, naked power; blunt and unemotional; harshly realistic. But as an individual? "A child would like to sit in his lap," we have read in the reports of former Ambassador Davies, "and a dog would sidle up to him."

For all our interest in the drama of Russia and our underlying sympathy for the Russian people, and despite our common goal of a peace that would enable us to work out our respective destinies, the political systems of the two countries have always been at opposite poles. Autocracy has been arrayed against Republicanism, Communism against Democracy. And this ideological conflict has led to periods of dangerous friction between the two governments. By the opening of the twentieth century, the oppressive tyranny of Czarist Russia as contrasted with the progressive liberalism of America threatened a serious breach in our official relations, but with the advent of Communism, the mutual antagonism between two even more opposing systems of government overlaid our traditional friendship with so tough a crust of mutual suspicion that for a time that friendship appeared to be doomed.

The interplay of these various factors in Russian-American history provides the framework for a story of compelling interest. As far back as the close of the eighteenth century, when the United States first sought Russian recognition, the contrast be-

tween the parallelism in our foreign policies and the conflict in political ideas was apparent. Catherine the Great would not lend her Cossacks for the suppression of American rebels since she welcomed any development that might reduce the power of Great Britain, but at the same time she could hardly look with favor upon republican revolt against monarchical authority. In the nineteenth century, the divergence between American and Russian political ideals did not deflect either nation from acting in concert to restrain, whenever possible, British maritime supremacy. The most autocratic of European governments and republican America together tried to uphold the freedom of the seas during the Napoleonic Wars. Jefferson declared that Russia was the most cordially friendly of all European powers, and Alexander gave proof of such an attitude by offering to mediate in our war with England in 1812. In their mutual desire to see each other strong and powerful as a counterpoise to Great Britain, the United States and Russia refused in the middle of the century to submit to European pressure for intervention in one another's internal affairs. America sympathized with Russia during the Crimean War; Russia stood stanchly by the Union in the crisis of our Civil War.

A solidarity firmly based upon national interest was apparently sealed with our purchase of Alaska. The two nations could hardly have been in closer accord. "Russia and the United States," we find the *New York Herald* confidently proclaiming in 1867, "must ever be friendly, the colossi having neither territorial nor maritime jealousies to excite the one against the other. The interests of both demand that they should go hand in hand in their march to empire."

The turn of the century nevertheless witnessed the first serious estrangement between the two nations. For a time their foreign policies clashed in a growing rivalry over trade and political interests in the Far East, while our underlying political antagonism flared up in American resentment at the reactionary program that was being pursued by Nicholas II. This outburst of hostility began to subside when Japan took up the challenge of Russian imperialism in eastern Asia. The rise of that new power in the Pacific, a far more ominous threat to American in-

terests than Czarist Russia, once again brought our foreign policies in accord. Although there remained serious friction because of opposing political views, Japan began to take over the role that Great Britain had played in the nineteenth century as a catalytic agent in Russian-American relations.

The first World War created an even more important community of interests. Although the United States stood aloof for almost three years, we were eventually drawn into the struggle and found ourselves fighting side by side with Russia against the same foe. The challenge of Germany had sharply emphasized the common basis of our foreign policies. For a brief time too the old paradox of converging aims abroad and opposing political systems at home was resolved. With the overthrow of the Czar, Russia and the United States were aligned not only in support of their national security but in defense of democratic rights. "Here is a fit partner for a League of Honor," was President Wilson's enthusiastic welcome of Free Russia.

These days were short-lived. The Bolshevik revolution and establishment of the Soviet government renewed in far more virulent form the old ideological conflict. The political and economic system that Russia now adopted was not only abhorrent to democratic America, but its threat of world revolution was a far more aggressive challenge to our social order than Czarist tyranny. Militant Communism could not be dismissed as in no way menacing American institutions. The possible bases of co-operation in the field of international affairs were undermined by contention far more bitter than anything Russia and America had experienced in the past. With emotions heightened by the hysteria of war, and under as complex and complicated a set of factors as ever bedeviled the relations between two countries, suspicion and mistrust wholly replaced the understanding of more than a century.

There were substantial grounds for this new hostility. Russia feared capitalistic encirclement; the United States feared the Communist propaganda of revolution. The Soviet Union could point to American intervention at Archangel and in Siberia, and the United States to the subversive interference in our affairs by spokesmen of the Third International. Diplomatic rela-

tions between the two countries remained severed for sixteen years as the United States obstinately refused to recognize the Soviet regime. The two great nations stood forth as champions of apparently irreconcilable social and political systems. The mutual antagonisms thus aroused set the pattern for Russian-American relations, even after we had at last recognized the Soviets in 1933, during a quarter-century of decisive world history.

Nevertheless the fundamental interests that had drawn Russia and America together in the past had not lost their validity. Both nations still needed above everything else national security in order to develop their great natural resources and to promote the economic progress upon which Russia as well as the United States had now embarked. Any threat to world peace was their common concern. The forces that had made for Russian-American friendship through the long years since they had together tried to uphold the freedom of the seas were still operating.

A renewed threat of Japanese imperialism in the Far East first brought this out. It was an important factor in our belated decision to recognize the Soviet government. But the still graver danger of Fascism failed to bring about any effective collaboration in restraining the aggression of Germany, even though events would soon prove it to be the really vital challenge to the peace and freedom of both nations. The two most powerful countries in the world were prevented by the mistrust and suspicion born of bitter ideological differences from acting in concert despite their ancient friendship and long record of mutual cooperation. The idea of collective security was thereby doomed. The United States and Soviet Russia retreated into isolation and war gradually engulfed the world.

It was only actual attack by the Axis powers, from which both the United States and Russia had sought to guard themselves by a policy of precarious neutrality, that finally brought the two nations together once again in defense of their liberties. A danger perhaps more urgent than either country had ever faced forced them to set aside their political controversies and seek to overcome a quarter of a century of discord in order that they might join forces, in common with other members of the United Na-

tions, to repel the onslaught of totalitarian powers jeopardizing the freedom of the entire world.

The revival of their historic friendship could not fail to prove difficult. But the very fact that its roots were so deep in the past, and that it had developed through the years out of common interests transcending all other points of difference, marked the effort toward a new rapprochement as conforming not only to the immediate but also to the long-term interests of the two nations. Their leaders were in agreement that it was vital that the United States and Russia should remain in accord if the world was ever to know enduring peace. The conference at Teheran was both confirmation of the past and promise for the future.

## II

### AT THE COURT OF THE CZARS

ON AUGUST 27, 1781, a young American, Francis Dana of Massachusetts, arrived at the Russian capital of St. Petersburg charged with the mission of seeking recognition of the United States from that "wise and virtuous Princess," the Empress Catherine II. It was a delicate task. Could the autocratic ruler of All-the-Russias be expected to receive the envoy of a handful of struggling colonies in rebellion against the might and authority of the British crown? To avoid the possibility of a humiliating rebuff, Dana was cautiously traveling "in the character of a private gentleman." Nevertheless he reached St. Petersburg fully impressed with the importance of his mission and hopeful of success.

The Continental Congress had considered the possibilities of this move as early as December 1776. Nothing had been done about it at that time, but by 1781 developments in Europe gave rise to the belief that for all her own devotion to autocratic principles of government, Catherine might be willing to welcome the United States into the family of nations. It was known that she had refused to loan any of her Cossacks to George III for the subjugation of the rebels against his rule. It was believed that she was sympathetic toward the Americans, not for their republicanism but because Anglo-Russian rivalry might be expected to make her favor any movement weakening the British Empire. Also she had a scheme on foot which the Continental Congress thought might provide a means for the United States to win her friendly support.

As a result of the constant interference with neutral shipping in the course of the general war raging among England, France and Spain, the Empress had taken the lead the year before in establishing a Maritime Confederacy for the protection of the rights of nonbelligerents. Sweden and Denmark had joined forces with Russia in an Armed Neutrality. In a sharp challenge

to England's customary interference with neutral commerce, the Maritime Confederacy advanced the principles that free ships make free goods, that contraband should be expressly limited to arms and ammunition, and that no blockade is legal unless it is effectively enforced.

America, at war with Great Britain, was prepared to accept this interpretation of the rules of naval warfare. Our interests in this respect were identical with those of the Maritime Confederacy. Although Catherine's invitation to join the Armed Neutrality was extended to neutrals rather than belligerents, the Continental Congress hoped that by expressing a willingness to acknowledge its principles the United States might be admitted to membership. If Catherine could be prevailed upon to accept American adherence, it would constitute recognition of our independence and immensely strengthen our international position. The prize appeared well worth the effort of dispatching an envoy to St. Petersburg.

Against this background, but with no direct knowledge of what Russia's attitude might be, the Continental Congress had instructed Dana to seek recognition and possible support from Russia, to undertake negotiation of a treaty of amity and commerce, and to urge upon Catherine the advisability of the United States being "formally admitted as a party to the conventions of the neutral maritime powers." He was, however, to cooperate with the French government, our one ally in Europe, and to make no move in approaching Catherine which the French ambassador at St. Petersburg did not approve. To this extent at least our inexperience in the wiles of European diplomacy was recognized and the tutelage of France accepted for the proposed negotiations.

Dana was already abroad when the dispatches telling of his appointment reached him and it was after consultations in Paris with Benjamin Franklin and John Adams that he made the decision to travel privately rather than to storm St. Petersburg in his official capacity. For these experienced diplomats were not as sanguine as the members of the Continental Congress about the American envoy's welcome. Russian foreign policy could hardly be predicted when it had to conform to the changing



whims of an ambitious and self-willed autocrat. Soon Dana found these doubts more than confirmed. The French minister at St. Petersburg, the Marquis de Verac, strongly advised him to make no advances whatsoever to the court. He was certain they would be flatly rejected.

Dana was of a somewhat suspicious nature. He became convinced that the Marquis de Verac was attempting to block his path out of jealousy and a desire to prevent the United States from escaping French tutelage. There was perhaps some basis for this general charge. France did not like to see the Continental Congress make any diplomatic moves on its own initiative. The French minister on this occasion, however, was acting both in good faith and with far greater understanding of the European situation than Dana possessed. For by the time Dana reached St. Petersburg Catherine was playing with a new political ambition. She had almost forgotten the Maritime Confederacy. She would soon refer to it herself as the "Armed Nullity." In cooperation with the Emperor of Austria she had proposed mediation in the war between England and France and was casting herself in the magnificent role of the Pacificator of Europe.

Obviously under such circumstances there could be no recognition of the United States and no thought of admitting the young republic to any European League. Catherine could not afford to prejudice her neutrality in the eyes of Great Britain. "It is therefore clear," the Marquis de Verac sought to explain to Dana, "that their design is to avoid compromising themselves by acknowledging the independence of the United States until England herself shall have taken the lead." The American could not deny this logic nor act against the informed advice of his mentor. There was nothing for him to do but wait a more propitious time for seeking an audience.

Dana was doubly exiled in St. Petersburg. He was far from home and completely cut off from the social life of one of the most gay, colorful and sophisticated courts of all Europe. Catherine ruled in autocratic splendor and entertained lavishly amid surroundings that amazed all visitors. Her balls and receptions were dazzling, and no expense was spared to impress foreigners