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RESTRICTED**RUSSIA***Professor Hans Kohn*

Gentlemen:

What I shall try to do today is to give an historical background, trying as far as possible in so short a time, to explain the main line of Russia's development. All nations are determined in their actions and strivings by their past history. This is more true of Russia than of many other European nations for the very simple reason that, throughout a very long time, Russia led a very secluded life. The secluded life led today by Russia, its complete and entirely voluntary isolation from the outside world is nothing unknown in her history, and this isolation, this seclusion, naturally increases the effect of the historical character of the nation.

As you know, in the middle of the 19th century, Tocqueville, the French writer and statesman, in his famous book on American democracy, predicted that in the 20th century there would emerge two great nations dividing the world between them, one Russia and the other the United States (or as he called it, the Anglo-American) and he predicted that these two nations, arising simultaneously at the peak of their power, would show a similar vitality, and yet in all their ideas, in their starting points, in their methods, would be at the very opposite ends of human development. Tocqueville's predictions of 100 years ago have today been realized. I think that in most ways the American heritage and the Russian heritage are at the very opposite ends of the range of human possibility and this polarity is the more striking because both races, the Anglo-American and the Russian, have shown themselves to

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be great colonizing, pioneering races. You might say that throughout Russian history you have one continuing feature—that of expansion through pioneering and colonization. From the 11th century on, Russia expanded, and expanded on the whole into a pattern built on a plan.

As you know, what we call Russia today originated in the west, nearer to Europe than Russia is today. The first settlements of Russian Slavs were along the trade route connecting the Baltic Sea with the Black Sea. Along this trade route, along these roads there grew up large urban centers not fundamentally different from European urban trading centers. The most important among them, Novgorod in the north, Kiev in the south, were very near to what was then regarded as the centers of civilization. Kiev, on the Dnieper, was on the route to the Black Sea, to Byzantium or Constantinople, to the Mediterranean, and to the seats of ancient great civilizations. On the other hand, Novgorod drew strengthening influences from the Scandinavian countries of the Vikings and from the German element of the trading Hansa. From Byzantium or Constantinople the Russian Slavic tribes received their Christianity; from Scandinavia they received their ruling house. But they did not remain for long in contact with Europe. From the 11th century on, these Slavic tribes expanded, expanded into wilderness, into primitive forest lands toward the North and East.

In its future development Russian history was not determined by Kiev, not determined by what we might call its western aspects—its nearness to Byzantium and Europe. Russia's whole development from the 16th century on, was determined by Moscow—a settlement in new colonial lands explored by Russian settlers who penetrated into the dense forests of northern and northeastern Russia where at that time Finnish tribes were living, intermingled with these Finnish tribes, and established new centers of Russia far

away from contact with the west, far away from western influence.

If you look at the map to determine where Moscow is, it is not on the Dnieper River. Moscow is not looking toward the Black Sea, toward ancient seats of Hellenistic civilization. Moscow is on a small river, the Moskva, flowing to the Oka which flows into the Volga. The Volga flows to the Caspian Sea, an inland sea in the midst of Asiatic steppes. There are no roads from Moscow leading to the west. All roads from Moscow lead to Asia, to the immense steppes of Asia.

Now as you very well know, this development of Russia away from Europe was finally consummated by the famous Mongol or Tartar invasion of Russia in the 13th century. Kiev was destroyed. The whole urban civilization of Russia ended, and for 250 years Russia was dominated by the Tartars, by Russian princes under Tartar sovereignty. The Russians inter-married with Tartars and built up the Russian stock of today.

At that time no roads led from Moscow to Europe. An entirely different civilization grew up in Russia. What we call the common European experience—the 13th century Middle Ages with its knights and chivalry, with its flowering of the Universities of Paris, Bologna, Oxford, Cologne and their high learning—remains unknown in Russia, nor were the Renaissance and the Reformation common experiences for East and West. When the modern Europe emerged out of the Renaissance and Reformation there was no contact whatsoever with Russia. Russia had no share in the discovery of the humanities and in the rise of modern science. The connections between Russia and the West no longer existed as in the pre-Mongol trade routes. Russia was no longer the *eastern* fringe of Europe but was the *western* fringe of Asia.

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While Russia was in that way cut off from Europe, Moscow, one of the many Russian cities founded by colonizing during the period of European contacts prior to the Mongol conquest, emerged to lead Christian Russia by the strength of its princes. I think it interesting to the student of history, to draw a parallel with Germany. As you may remember, the old civilized part of Germany is western Germany, the land along the Rhine, where the old German civilization flourished—but where did modern German power arise? It did not arise in western Germany, but in eastern Germany, in Brandenburg, in Prussia, and in the eastern borders of Germany which until the 13th century had been Slavonic lands and which were then overrun by Germans—by German knights and settlers. Modern Germany has its political power-roots in the colonial expansion and conquests eastwards.

As German power became centered, not in the west, but in the east, in the newly conquered and newly settled lands through the strength of the great rulers of the House of Hohenzollern in Berlin—so modern Russia arose, not around the Dnieper, not near the Black Sea nor the Baltic Sea, not near Europe, but in the newly colonized land that was Moscow, through a line of great princes.

I wish to mention two of them, Ivan the III and Ivan the IV, who ruled in the 15th and 16th centuries, and whose imprint on Russian history remains until today. We may say that Ivan the III and Ivan the IV, both rulers of great capacity, shaped and molded the Russian pattern as it has survived until today. And if we ask ourselves, “What did these two princes accomplish?” we may sum it up in the following three statements: one, they overthrew the Tartar yoke, the Tartar domination, and they liberated Moscow from Tartar political rule, but not from Tartar social and intellectual influences. The Tartar political domination went out but not its influence, the influence of the Tartar mind, and from this

moment on, the Russian princes, the princes of Moscow, turned eastward to the Volga, to the Ural mountains and beyond, and Moscow regarded herself—still regards herself as a legitimate heir to the Mongol empire, or if you wish to say it differently, to the Asian Empire.

At the end of the 16th century, Russian men, the Cossacks, who were colonizers, traders and soldiers in one, crossed the Ural mountains into Siberia—crossed an immense distance from the Volga River to the Pacific Ocean. This was an immense achievement. It took less than 100 years for the Russians to cross the immense land of Northern Asia, and at the end of the 17th century, not today nor yesterday, the Russians were knocking at the door of China. The first encounter of Russia with China dates back more than 250 years. If the Russians say, "We opened the Far East," historically they are right. They preceded the British and the Americans by 100 years. There is one thing that happened and which was never forgotten by the Russians: Asia had ruled Russia; now Russia was out to rule Asia.

There are two other aspects which are more important to us and to Europe, and the second aspect which again happened in the time of Ivan the III and Ivan the IV was something of immense importance to the whole of western mankind. As you know, in 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople. We cannot understand what that meant unless we try to remember that Constantinople was to all Eastern Europeans the seat of the Roman Empire and the seat of the true faith. Constantinople was the *real* Roman Empire. If you remember reading Gibbons' famous history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire (the Roman Empire of which he speaks was the only one which was the legitimate Roman Empire—not that of the German kings nor the Roman Popes, but the one of Constantinople) you will remember that Constantine in 333 trans-

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ferred the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, to Constantinople. And you will remember that at that time the Roman Empire became a *Christian* Roman Empire. That means that the old Roman Empire in Italy had been a pagan, a heathen Roman Empire. The only true Christian Roman Empire was that of Byzantium, of Constantinople.

Now, you must again realize that until about 1400 every European, every civilized human being longed for the return of the "peace and justice" of the Roman Empire. If you ever take the time to read what I regard the outstanding political treatise of the Middle Ages, Dante's "De Monarchia" you will find that the whole thought of that time centered about the desire to create again a world government, a world order, because don't forget, what our modern world Federalists discuss, what our modern world government people discuss, is not a new invention by them; it is a recollection of what one thousand years of European consciousness remembers—a period when there was one world government, the Roman, and one world faith, the Christian. And Roman Constantinople, to all the minds of that time, was the legitimate seat of world order to bring back peace and justice to all of mankind. And now the legitimate seat of world order and of world faith was destroyed by the Turks and on the most sacred place of Christianity, on Saint Sofia, the cross went down and the crescent went up. That was something that shook contemporary humanity. Now the question was, "Who would succeed imperial Constantinople? Who would succeed to this role of bringing peace and justice to mankind? Who would succeed to the task of protecting and spreading the true faith—"orthodoxy"—against the deviations and the heretics of the west?"

Now there was no doubt with the Russians that the center of the true faith was in Moscow, that they were called to this mission and to this role. The Moscow princes, until then known as "grand

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princes”, assumed the title of tsar (and “tsar” means “Caesar”—the legitimate heir to world order). Moscow became now, as the Russians called it, the third Rome; no longer the first Rome, which had been the pagan Rome of the Empire centered in Italy where now to them the “heretic Pope” was sitting; and no longer Constantinople, the second Rome now dominated by the infidels or the Turks; but Moscow, the holy city, the third and final Rome.

And now you must understand one thing about the Russians which is so difficult for us to grasp: the Russians have always been, and still are, a deeply religious people, religious extremists or fanatics, and you can't understand Russian Communism unless you envision the fact that the Russians never went through what we call the period of enlightenment of rational thought. Today these people still are deeply religious; they have regarded themselves and not without some justification, as the most Christian people on earth. The Russians, a long-suffering, immensely patient people, who in their humility saw the mark of Christianity, regarded themselves, and again not without some justification, as carrying the cross and carrying it for mankind. What you find today as communism is only, in a certain way, a metamorphosis of this deep fanatical religious conviction that the Russians, and they alone, had the true faith. They have suffered for it and they justify this suffering to themselves by a messianic complex: *they have to save mankind*. That is something deeply ingrained in the Russian mind since the 15th and 16th century. Moscow, the third Rome, is the standard by which mankind will be ordered. To achieve this goal the Russians have to preserve their faith pure. Its principal enemies, the unfortunate heretics of the West, will be exterminated, and Russian victory will be helped by the complete isolation from the West. The desire not to be contaminated by the heretical West was a deep Russian belief long before Marx, Lenin or Stalin.

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The third thing that Ivan IV did (and you will notice that Ivan IV in history is called Ivan the Terrible, Ivan the Awe-inspiring, Ivan the Terror) was to exterminate all remnants of human liberty and individual rights in Russia for the sake of creating a stronger unity in Russia so that Russia might be better able to perform her mission of leading the world. What he did was to destroy whatever remnant there was of what you might call a stratified society, and what emerged in Russia was a complete lack of liberty and a very far reaching equality. From the time of Ivan IV on, and until Catherine II, the Russian noblemen, the most ancient Boyar families, had no more rights than the most abject serf. The Boyars and the serf were equally nobody before the Tsar, and there was only one will dominating Russia—the will of the self ruler, the autocrat. Without being bound by law the men in the Kremlin were great and strong men; Ivan IV, like Stalin, ruled the millions of Russians giving them no rights whatsoever, and by this formed a monolithic closed-in community. These are the three innovations which came from Moscow.

Then came the time when a highly gifted ruler of Muscovy, Peter the Great, came to the conclusion that this secluded Muscovy was too weak in technology to resist Europe and he decided to modernize Russia as Stalin is now doing—not to bring the spirit of Europe to Russia, but to make Russia strong enough to resist and perhaps to overwhelm Europe. It was Peter's genius to recognize that Russia needed a complete overhauling of her equipment, of her armor. Peter was the first modern man in Russia. What is meant by a modern man is a man who understands the importance of technique, of science. You know he went to western Europe to explore the techniques himself. He went to learn shipbuilding. He created the Russian navy. More important, however, he tried to bring western culture, western technology to Russia—an immense enterprise, in which, by the way, he did not suc-

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ceed. The people were much too backward to follow his lead of genius. But he did one thing; he took Russia which had until then been looking eastward, and with immense violence and ruthlessness he turned her face westward.

You know that at that time Russia was separated from Europe by three empires from the north to south, three great empires shutting Russia up—the Swedish Empire, the Polish Empire, and the Turkish Empire—and through these three empires all roads from Russia to the west, to Germany, to Holland, to England were cut. Peter decided to destroy these three empires. He succeeded with one himself and that was the Swedish Empire. His successor, Catherine II, defeated the second one, the Polish Empire, and opened the road to Turkey by conquering the Crimea and the shore of the Black Sea. The Russians, from this time on, endeavored to destroy the Turkish Empire. They have not yet succeeded; Constantinople is not yet in Russian hands, but throughout Russian history from 1500 on they have tried to get Constantinople, not for economic reasons (I'm deeply convinced that no great nation is driven by economic reasons into great adventure) but because of this heritage, this tradition. In Russian, Constantinople is not called Constantinople but Tsargrad, the city of the Tsars. And maybe Tsar Stalin will reside in the city of the Tsars.

Peter the Great began to bring Russia nearer to Europe. He acted the man of energy which he was. I wish to point out that Russia, which on the whole had rather mediocre princes, has had three men of genius, if you regard energy, resourcefulness and ruthlessness as marks of genius; Ivan the IV, Peter the Great, and Stalin. You know that the word Stalin means "Man of Steel" and in that sense Peter was also a "Man of Steel". He decided to leave Moscow; Moscow was Asia, Moscow was a part of Asia and

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he left it to found a new capital and the new capital that he founded, as you know, was St. Petersburg. Where did he found it? He founded it not in Russia, but outside of Russia, in newly conquered lands on the Baltic Sea, in marsh land where no Russian peasant had ever tilled the soil, where there was no memory of the Russian past. In an entirely new land he created a new city. You find an immense difference in Moscow and Leningrad. By 1931 Moscow was still a widespread, sprawling Asiatic village around the Asian fortress, the Kremlin. And then there was St. Petersburg, the modern European capital, beautiful beyond words, a part of the West, the imperial West, a real imperial city, thought out by a great planner and built by him. In Moscow you smelled Asia; in Leningrad you were in a city like Stockholm, like Edinburgh, like a northern capital. Peter the Great wished to change Russia, not in the sense to make her European in her mind and not to bring liberty to Russia, but to equip her with the "savoir faire" of Europeans, the "know-how" if I may use a word of today. He wished to make Russia into Pittsburgh, into Detroit, just as Stalin wishes to do—not to introduce the spirit of the West, but the technique of the West.

For 100 years his European teaching did not penetrate the Russian people. Even under Catherine the Second it touched only the court aristocracy, but then came an event that changed Russia and that was the Napoleonic War. Not only did the French come into Moscow, but as you know, as a result the Russians went into Europe, into Paris, into Berlin, into Vienna, into Switzerland into the central part of Europe.

I wish to make a side remark. During the war, in Britain and in the United States, many people said, "Look what a good man Stalin must be because the Russians are fighting so well against the Germans," and the conclusion was drawn that the

Bolshevik regime had really created a new loyalty amongst the Russian people. That's nonsense, because we know that in 1812, when there was no Stalin or Lenin around, the Russians fought a winning battle. Suppose we ask ourselves, "Who was the greater military genius, Hitler or Napoleon?" I'm not a military expert, as you know, but there is no doubt with me that Hitler's intuitions were not very good and Napoleon had behind him 20 years of military glory and military success when his grand army started its march into Muscovy. Yet Hitler penetrated much further into Russia and when he was stopped by the Russians, he was defeated by the very same factors which defeated Napoleon, namely, the immense expanse of Russia, the poor communications, an unprecedentedly hard and early winter, and the strong patriotism, the immense stamina of the Russian people, then and now.

In any case, when Napoleon was defeated and the Russians came into Europe, they began (and when I say they, I mean the intelligentsia, the educated classes, and at that time, 1815 to 1830, the educated classes were made up mostly of the officers) to understand what Europe meant, what liberty meant, what freedom meant. They saw European social life, learned European artistic expressions, and from that moment on started a new Russian movement. We may say from this moment, from December 14, 1825, the famous day when some of the regiments of the Tsar under the leadership of some officers rose to demand a constitution and started the first of the Russian revolutions—a revolution by officers and aristocrats demanding an end to the lawless autocracy in Russia and demanding an introduction of European liberty under law on Russia—from that moment until March 1917, for more than 90 years, the Russian intelligentsia, the educated classes, fought against autocracy for a true Europeanization of Russia. They fought to integrate Russia into Europe, to make Russia really a part of Europe and Europe's heritage, and these years have

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an immense achievement to their credit. Russia and Europe met to a limited extent, but met for the first time really. This meeting, this encounter, brought to Russia the first penetration of some liberty into Russia and produced for the first time in Russia a great literature.

Now look how under this first intercourse between Europe and Russia, how suddenly out of virgin soil there grew up a literature which was one of the greatest literatures in the history of modern mankind. For eighty years this literature enriched Europe by showing new depths of humanity, new waves of feeling, and brought to Russia an entirely new type of culture which Russia had never had before. Now, as you know, in March 1917, more than 31 years ago, the efforts of generations of Russians seemed to succeed. Tsarist autocracy was overthrown, and for the first time and for the last time in Russian history, for six months Russia was a free country. All the old police state institutions were abolished overnight. Russia was opened up to liberty under law. It was not to last, as you know. It came too suddenly; it came at a time when Russia, exhausted by war efforts, was in a state of chaos, and the Russian masses were not prepared for it. Don't forget that until 1861 the Russian people had lived in serfdom.

Only in March 1861 was serfdom in Russia abolished, and serfdom was something in Russia which included 78% of the population. When they were emancipated in 1861, they did not receive individual property. No sense of individual rights or of individual property could grow up so fast amongst the Russian masses. Only after 1907 there began to penetrate into the Russian village what we call free enterprise, individual rights and individual property.

In 1917 Lenin's revolution came to destroy Russia's young liberty, not because there was too much capitalism in Russia, but because there was too little capitalism in Russia. In Rus-

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sia there was too little individual property, too little stake of the masses in the inherited system. In November 1917, under the leadership of Lenin, his closely knit group of Bolsheviks seized power. The Bolsheviks were not a party in our sense of the word, but a closely knit group of conspirators, a conspiracy for the sole purpose to seize power by all means and to hold fast to it. The Bolsheviks could seize power because they were not a party but a group, a military, militant group of a closely knit character, prepared for one purpose and one purpose alone—to seize power. They could carry the masses with them because the masses in Russia then did not care for a constitution nor for liberty. Lenin promised them peace and land.

It should be said that the only freely elected parliament or national assembly in Russia (and Russia had only one in her whole history) was elected in November 1917. The elections to this Constituent Assembly resulted in a decided Bolshevik minority. When this Constituent Assembly met, it was the realization of the dreams of eighty years of Russian revolution and liberation. But the Bolsheviks made short work of "democracy". They sent in a group of drunken sailors and dispersed the Constituent Assembly; and the dream of Russian liberty, of the integration of Russia into Europe, into western mankind, was ended.

And what you find today in Russia is a new, secluded, isolated community—distrustful, hateful of the West, knowing and conscious that it is being called upon again to spread the true faith throughout the world and to "liberate" mankind from war, oppression, and injustice. To realize their Utopia, they believe themselves entitled to use any and every means to exterminate and to overcome all those who do not share fully their hopes or who deviate to the slightest degree from the narrow path which the infallible and omnipotent autocracy and its infallible, omniscient leader orders his followers and all mankind to walk.