

Ira Hirschman Papers

Box 3

Letter From Alexander Rustow

9/25/44

Istanbul-Kadikoy, Muhurdar Caddesi 121

September 25, 1944.

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

Our conversation yesterday was again very pleasant, but not long enough. Since it is not certain whether we shall see you again before your return to the States, I would like to put on record a few points for which we did not have enough time yesterday.

You mentioned that Soviet Russia is at present in an extremely strong position, due not only to her military potentialities and actual successes, but even more so because she is less interested than any of her allies in maintaining good relations with those allies until the day of Hitler's defeat. The reason for this attitude is the fact that, if serious differences would arise, Russia would always have the possibility of an alliance with Germany and Japan, whereas no such possibility would be open to the United States and England. Russia has no public opinion to consider while public opinion in the States and England is, to a considerable extent, pro-Russian and 99% anti-Japanese and anti-Nazi. Therefore, Russia at this moment can get away with practically anything and may exert pressure by the implied blackmailing threat of a rupture. This situation, she utilizes to the full and with admirable adroitness.

So far, I completely agree with you. What I want to point out, however, in this connection, is that Russia's present superiority will only last until the fall of Hitler and that from that moment on the situation will be completely changed. On the one hand, Russia will no longer be able to use the threat of a change of front, and on the other hand, the States and England no longer have to fear the military effects of a split with Russia since they will be stronger than Russia, bled to exhaustion, with her industrial machine overtaxed and her civilian population underfed. Furthermore, the States and England will concentrate their combined efforts on the war against Japan, while Russia will certainly maintain her neutrality towards Japan, having an interest in the preservation of that country as a counterbalance against Chiang Kai Chek. She will continue her present policy of obtaining whatever she wants from Japan by blackmail. The common fight against Hitler Germany, and Russia's sacrifices and successes in this fight, have heightened Russia's popularity in the Anglo-Saxon countries. However, this popularity will decrease considerably once it turns out that Russia leaves her allies alone to their fight against Japan, which will cost them much blood yet. After the Anglo-Saxons did all they could to help Russia against Germany, this will be considered an act of treason. Enthusiasm for Russia will lose in scope considerably; and once more people will realize that Soviet Russia is just as totalitarian and undemocratic as Nazi Germany, that Russia was allied with Germany against the democracies

from 1939 to 1941, and that it never gave up this alliance by its own free will, but because it was invaded by the Germans.

Once Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Tojo's Japan are finally defeated, Soviet Russia will remain the only undemocratic and totalitarian country in the world, and the fundamental difference between her and the democracies will no longer be covered up by common interests against third countries. A great conflict will then arise between the principle of democracy, under the leadership of America, and the totalitarian principle, as represented by Russia. The outcome of this conflict will shape the future of mankind for a long time to come. It may be possible, and it is to be hoped, that it will be settled peacefully. The strength of the democracies in this conflict will depend largely on the extent to which they succeed in making their own principles clear. And this is the reason why I consider it of the utmost importance to crystallize and formulate these principles and why I personally feel it my duty to devote all my time and energy to this one task. This is also the reason why I aspire to a research post in Switzerland which seems to me to be the best working place for somebody in my position, - at least as long as it is not certain whether I can be employed in Germany proper in any useful capacity.

This I believe was the most important of the points I wanted to raise. But I also want to add a few personal remarks with regard to those secret negotiations about which we spoke towards the end of our conversation. As you know, these negotiations were conducted, on the American side, by Mr. Alfred Schwarz, for the Military Department. I have closely collaborated with Mr. Schwarz in this and many other matters and have conceived high esteem for him. Efficiency and energy are, of course, not rare in people who do this kind of work. But very often they appear combined with cold cynicism and an interest limited to the technical success of the job. Exactly the contrary is true for Mr. Schwarz. He is, just as we are, deeply convinced of the necessity of humane conduct in personal and political matters, and he has been guided by this conviction, and fought for it, in all his official functions. By doing so, he has made many enemies and caused many difficulties to himself, since it would have been so much more comfortable both for him and his colleagues and superior officers if he had confined himself to execute the technical part of his work, without troubling about human sympathy and understanding. The difficulty of his position was further increased by his being a Jew and a Czechoslovak national. He was very successful in the purely military field, for instance in indicating bombing targets of particular importance. However, it has been held against him that those successes in the destruction of human lives were much less important to him than his endeavors to save human lives, both in general and in particular. This exactly conforms with the viewpoint so vigorously expressed by you yesterday.

As far as I know, Mr. Alfred Schwarz is anxious to have a thorough discussion with Mr. Steinhardt, which is to take place soon. Up to now, he was never in close contact with him, owing to the strict separation of diplomatic and military departments.

If you think it wise, you might mention something about him to Mr. Steinhardt. If it should be desired, I am, of course, also perfectly willing to make a statement concerning my experiences in working with Mr. Schwarz. Mr. Schwarz is in no way responsible for the tragic breakdown of the negotiations about which I talked to you. On the contrary, he did all he could, but did not succeed in bringing the American authorities to treat this matter with the amount of energy which its extreme importance would have deserved - and this in spite of the grave mistakes made by the other side.

It is a great pity that at the time we had nobody like you here.

Finally, I would like to ask you, on your return to New York, to give my regards to Mr. Alvin Johnson and the other gentlemen of the New School and to tell them something about my activities and my position here. You know that I received two calls from the Graduate Faculty, both instigated at a moment when Turkey was threatened by a German invasion and our lives were in immediate danger. You can imagine how grateful we were to all friends for all their many efforts and endeavors. The first time, a dangerous illness of my wife prevented us from leaving. The second time, early in 1943, it was the birth of our little boy which, under present traveling conditions, made a trip overseas impossible. In addition, just at that moment those important negotiations were in progress and made my presence here a political necessity. I am most anxious for my New York friends to understand my position and not to be disappointed or offended by my continued absence in spite of their repeated efforts.

Once again, I want to tell you that it has been a great pleasure for us to meet you. Now let us both do everything to keep in touch with each other, despite the present difficulties of communication. I have never been to the United States yet, and I am feeling more deeply bound to my German fatherland, and under a greater duty to it, the greater the misery, unhappiness and ignomy into which national socialism has plunged her. - And yet, at the same time I consider the United States as my second home and my second fatherland, being the country in which rest all hopes of all men of good will for a humane and free future of the world. You will perhaps understand that I have found fresh confirmation for these hopes in what you told me about your own and your friends' convictions and endeavors. And besides, I would know of no other country in the world whose Government would entrust a mission such as yours to a man like you.

With kindest regards from us all,

very sincerely yours,

Alexander Rustow.