

*Also by Henri Michel*

THE SHADOW WAR

Henri Michel

# THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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for instigating it, was dead? Was there not a risk that Germany would become a bone of contention among its members? It is true that one last enemy still remained to be beaten - Japan. In order to try to settle the controversial issues and prepare for victory in the Pacific the Big Three met for the last time, in Potsdam.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Potsdam Conference

ALTHOUGH the Big Three had depicted the Yalta Conference as representing a climax of friendship and trust, relations between them had considerably deteriorated since then. What were the reasons for this and is it possible to assign responsibility for it?

Churchill's distrust of the USSR was plainly in some ways inherent and in any event already existed before Stalin's suspicious policies could have aggravated it further. But since the Normandy landing, Britain's importance in the coalition had greatly diminished and her impetuous and much-admired leader now had only a semblance of equality of power and decision with his partners. Both in strategy and diplomacy, it was Roosevelt's opinions which had carried the day in the Anglo-American alliance; whether he wanted to or not, Churchill had had to resign himself to endorsing them: relations between the 'Big Powers' were therefore now becoming increasingly nothing but a dialogue between the USSR and the United States.

Roosevelt cannot be held responsible for the new atmosphere which arose after Yalta. Although it is probable that he had sometimes been sorely disappointed, he had overcome his disappointments and had not changed his opinions. His death, however, had put an end to his personal influence which had acted as a sort of charm and there was nothing to replace it. Although his less sophisticated successor, Truman, had listened more readily to the Cassandras of the White House - Harriman, Deane and Leahy above all - even to the extent of cancelling the USSR's lend-lease privileges a few hours after the signing of the armistice<sup>1</sup> - he had nevertheless not turned his predecessor's goodwill towards the USSR into systematic hostility. The hints of strain or failure to maintain agreements did not come from his side.

The same obviously cannot be said for Stalin. After Yalta, he had looked after the interests of the USSR by going against virtually all the agreements and even commitments which he had approved of or endorsed. What is surprising is that this had surprised the British and Americans. Yet it was obvious that although they had all used the same words, they did not all

1. As a result of Stalin's energetic protests, the measure was explained away as a mistake and withdrawn.

understand them in the same way. As regards the smaller powers, had Stalin not suggested that they should support 'the political leaders who had taken an active part in the struggle against the German invaders'? Was this not admitting that he deliberately intended not to leave them the freedom to choose their own régime and government? Stalin had no idea of a western-type democracy based on free consultation with the people – and he said that he felt nothing but scorn for it. Besides, how could one suppose that the man who held the people of the USSR tightly in his iron grasp and refused to grant them any freedom, might behave any differently towards non-Soviet peoples whose territory had been conquered by the Red Army and who in addition had taken part in Hitler's anti-Bolshevik crusade? Surely they deserved to be punished, at least at the start? Just as he recognised unreservedly his partners' right to behave as they wished in their zones of occupation or influence, so Stalin had not the slightest doubts about his power to act exactly as he wanted in his zones. Whether he was motivated by a feeling of nationalism rooted deep in Russian history or by a justifiable distrust of Germany and a desire for revenge or by the wish to impose his conception of Communism on western Europe, or by all these reasons put together, Stalin was determined to be Stalin both inside and outside the USSR. A tragic mistrust had grown up between him and his partners, although fortunately, and thanks above all to Roosevelt, this did not have any serious consequences until after the war. Perhaps both sides had in fact been victims of mutual ignorance and of the mistakes to which it gave rise. In these circumstances the slightest dispute could not fail to become embittered.

#### I MATTERS OF DISPUTE

Some concerned Germany, which was a new and worrying factor; others were concerned with USSR policy in the territories controlled by the Red Army; the most serious of all, however, was still Poland.

In Germany, Admiral Doenitz had asked on May 5 for a sort of free enclave to be left on the Danish frontier so that his government and general staff could take their decisions with a semblance of independence; Doenitz had, strangely enough, referred to the precedent of the Vichy régime and the semi-freedom which it had been granted. Although Montgomery categorically rejected this request, he had in actual fact satisfied it: British troops had occupied the area around Flensburg but not the town itself, where Doenitz was. What is more, the admiral and his officers kept their weapons and still remained in command of a few groups of soldiers and sailors even after the total surrender of the Wehrmacht.

This method of procedure, which may have been dictated solely by cour-

tesy but more probably by the desire to bring about the surrender as quickly as possible by making the fullest use of the authority enjoyed by Hitler's successor, was no longer justifiable after May 9. The Americans were surprised and sent Murphy to see Doenitz. The Russians at once suspected their allies of hatching a plot, since it was Murphy who had thought up or carried out the idea of using Darlan in Algiers. On May 22, the British put an end to the incident by arresting Doenitz, Admiral von Friedeburg and Jodl; von Friedeburg, who was one of the signatories of the act of surrender in Rheims, committed suicide as a result.

Had Churchill something in the back of his mind? It would seem so in the light of his insistent suggestion to Truman that they should check the Soviet thrust in the west.

Otherwise [he wrote to Eden on May 4] there will be no hope of achieving a satisfactory result and very little of avoiding a third world war. It would be one of the blackest events in history . . . without precedent . . . and completely unforeseen by the Allies . . . if the Russian frontier started from the North Cape, crossed the Baltic east of Lübeck, cut across the whole breadth of Germany and extended from Czechoslovakia and the Isonzo.

How could this disaster be prevented? By negotiating knock for knock? Partly at Churchill's instigation and partly for military reasons Eisenhower had agreed that no line of contact with the Russians should be marked out in advance: both fronts would be free to shift as the fighting required; afterwards the necessary adjustments would be made, in keeping with the boundaries of the occupation zones which had been decided on at Yalta – boundaries, moreover, about which Churchill now began to make reservations, which was perhaps a hint that he was going to ask for them to be revised. Thus the Anglo-American armies had considerably overflowed into part of the future Soviet occupation zone.

Churchill intended that it should not be the military alone who should decide that the Anglo-American troops should return to their own zones. As early as April 27 he had informed Stalin, calling him 'my dear friend', that he considered it as a matter for the governments; but on May 2, Stalin had pretended not to understand. On May 5, the Polish question seemed to have reached a complete deadlock; it was Churchill's attitude, said Stalin, which made it impossible to reach an agreement. On May 6, Churchill suggested to Truman: 'We must not move from the positions which our armies have already occupied, or are in the process of occupying in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Austria, on the main American front in the centre and on the British front as far as Lübeck, including Denmark. Afterwards we must show the Soviets exactly what we have the power to grant or refuse them.' And Churchill was already envisaging Soviet con-

cessions in Poland, on the Danube and in the Balkans in exchange for benefits in the Black Sea and in the Baltic.

On May 12, Churchill gave to the world the famous expression: 'An iron curtain has fallen on the Soviet front', and he drew the conclusion 'that it is vital to reach an agreement with the Russians before we fatally weaken our armies or withdraw them to the occupation zones'. But Truman did not follow his ally's recommendations. On June 21, he suggested to Stalin that the American withdrawal should begin without more ado. On July 1, hundreds of thousands of German refugees followed the British and American troops who evacuated Thuringia, Saxony and Mecklenburg. On the other hand, on July 3, the British and Americans established themselves in Berlin; the Russians first of all refused to hand over their powers to them and to give up premises in the sectors which they were to occupy; they had to take them over at night and almost by force; the French arrived a few days later and on July 11 the quadripartite Allied government of Berlin came into being. The fact that they were established in Berlin gave the British and Americans a bargaining counter; but everywhere else in central Europe the dice were loaded in favour of the USSR.

In Czechoslovakia, which before the war had been the most liberal democracy in Europe, the Communists held eight ministerial posts – among them the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Information – in the government under the presidency of the Socialist Fierlinger, who was in favour of amalgamating his party with the Communist party.

In Austria the USSR had put the old Socialist, Renner, the former Chancellor, in power; in his government the Communists also held the key post of Minister of the Interior. As in Berlin, the Russians, under various pretexts, were opposed to the western powers' sending any missions; but once again Stalin eventually gave in and the Quadripartite Interallied Commission was set up. But the Russians supported the Yugoslav demands and they were occupying the richest part of Austria; they regarded it as German land, which meant that its wealth would be war booty for them to take.

In Italy Tito was hoping to keep Trieste, which his supporters had entered at the same time as the New Zealanders, since when each had settled himself in his own positions. However, in the Julian Veneto the Yugoslavs were behaving as if they were in an annexed country, changing the names of the villages and expelling eminent Italians. By doing this Tito was breaking the interallied agreement which in January 1945 he had at first endorsed, whereby the administration of all Italian territory was put in the hands of the Allied military command. Truman sent an actual ultimatum to Tito – even though the affair took place in a part of the world which the British regarded as their sphere; Tito submitted, or at least pretended to.

All these quarrels did not, after all, lead to a break. Stalin, who had been satisfied in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, probably put pressure on Tito, while at the same time supporting his demands. A sign that a new era was approaching was that the antagonism between the British and Russians which Roosevelt had been so much afraid of was turning into a confrontation between Russia and America and that relations remained strained even though a working agreement was beginning to be achieved. The Polish problem was not developing in a way likely to straighten matters out.

## II THE POLISH PROBLEM

Poland had not been included when, in the autumn of 1944, Churchill and Stalin had sat at a table in Moscow and divided Europe up into zones of influence. The Big Three had only promised to set up a provisional representative government which would proceed to hold free elections. The first stage of the Polish problem therefore merely amounted to amalgamating the exiled government in London with the Lublin Committee; the fate of Poland would obviously depend on the relative proportions of these two components.

In fact, the Russians had done everything within their power to ensure a comfortable majority for their protégés, whereas the latter most certainly did not represent more than a tiny minority of the Polish population. Churchill for his part had used all his weight to persuade Mikołajczyk to accept the Yalta decisions and he had succeeded in extracting a statement from him 'that a close and lasting friendship with Russia should form the keystone of Polish politics'. It quickly became plain that Stalin's attitude would not be altered by a few reassuring statements from people whom he regarded as his inveterate enemies. He seemed to have persuaded himself of two things, of which he remained firmly convinced; that it was absolutely necessary for the USSR to have as neighbour a Poland which was to some extent her vassal and that, apart from a few Communists, the Polish nation could only be hostile to the USSR.

On the one hand Stalin was going to stand out strongly against any foreign intrusion in Poland, which from now on was regarded as strictly his sphere and his alone. The names of the members of the London government suggested by his allies were challenged by him as being guilty of anti-Sovietism. He was even opposed to sending British and American observers to Warsaw on the pretext that 'the Poles would see this as an insult to their national dignity'; the first result of this was that there was delay in repatriating the Wehrmacht's prisoners of war who had been freed by the Red Army – French and Yugoslavs particularly.

At the same time the Lublin Committee's authority was reinforced by its protector both inside and outside the country. Stalin summoned leaders of the Secret Army and of the non-Communist Polish parties to Moscow; he gave them safe-conducts; they accepted his invitation, confidently expecting that their journey boded well for the forming of a new and acceptable Polish government. No sooner had they arrived in Moscow than the unfortunate men were accused of acts of hostility to the Red Army, imprisoned, tried by a Soviet military tribunal and sentenced to years of imprisonment. With a treachery that would not have disgraced a Tartar Khan, Stalin had simply lured them into a trap. Having thus rid the Lublin Committee of its opponents, he wanted to make it the sole representative of Poland at the San Francisco Conference, at which the United Nations Organisation was to take shape.

Churchill and Roosevelt had been stupefied by their partner's behaviour; but the American President at first refused to make any energetic protest; the British Premier was therefore reduced to appealing to Stalin's better feelings; he cabled to him that the future of the world was being built 'on the rock of their friendship'; he reminded him that he had been the first to accept the Curzon line as the USSR frontier in the west; he beseeched him 'not to strike a fatal blow against the hand of friendship which he was holding out to him, with an eye to assuming world control'. This sort of language was too much out of keeping with Churchill's temperament not to be regarded by Stalin as an admission of great weakness; he stuck to his guns and handed back to the British and Americans the responsibilities which they were trying to load on to him.

Roosevelt then broke his silence. At the end of March he addressed himself directly to Stalin, made no secret of the fact that he was worried and took refuge behind American public opinion which was very alarmed and which 'no government action could change' - a statement which had very little chance of being understood by a head of state who paid so little heed to the reactions of his own people. However, although Stalin did not give ground on essentials, Roosevelt's reaction did seem to make an impression on him; his reply was even rather encouraging, since he agreed, on certain conditions, that Mikolajczyk should come and see him in Moscow. But Roosevelt died before he was able to turn this ray of hope into a reality.

Truman quickly adopted a tougher tone. He curtly told Molotov that 'for the American people the Polish question had become the symbol of the future development of international relations'. The Russian reaction was one of violent protest. Stalin replied that he would accept in the Polish government only people 'who had given proof of their friendship towards the USSR' - which apparently excluded the whole of the London government. So each side remained obstinately deaf to the other; Churchill could

not see any way out except by another meeting of the Big Three 'before the American Armies left Europe; otherwise there was no hope of achieving a satisfactory result and very little of avoiding a third world war'. But could 'the spirit of Yalta' be revived?

### III THE POTSDAM CONFERENCE - THE POLISH PROBLEM

On July 17, 1945, the Big Three therefore met at Potsdam, in the former summer residence of the Crown Prince. The situation was no longer the same as at Yalta; the war was over in Europe and the British and Americans no longer needed to be so careful in their handling of the USSR; but it was still going on in Asia, where they did need her; moreover, at Yalta the USSR had promised to join in three months after the German surrender; the time was therefore nearly due.

In these circumstances the balance of power in Europe was all the more favourable to Stalin because there were numerous indications that the Americans wanted to repatriate their armies as quickly as possible. As early as May 7 Eisenhower had cabled to the joint general staff that 'his task was fully accomplished'. When he was unexpectedly called on to appear before several thousand American soldiers and did not quite know what to say to them, he had roused their enthusiasm by promising to have them back home in half the time by doubling the number of passengers on each boat - with part of them on deck and the rest below. How could one avoid the conclusion that America was sinking back into her original isolationism from which Roosevelt had had such difficulty in temporarily rousing her? The British would certainly not be taking her place. In the very middle of the conference and, it seems, to the absolute amazement of Stalin, to whom there was no risk of such a thing happening, Churchill was defeated in the elections and replaced as Prime Minister to represent Britain by his old Labour opponent, Clement Attlee. True, Attlee knew more about the problems involved than Truman did when Roosevelt died; but he was far from possessing his predecessor's pugnacity - Churchill said of him that he was 'a sheep in sheep's clothing'. Above all, the real meaning of the Labour victory was that the British people were very weary, which was yet another indication of Britain's weakness.

It is true that the Americans had a formidable weapon for exerting pressure on the USSR: on the very day on which the conference opened, Truman learned that the atom bomb had just been added to the American arsenal of weapons. But despite the fact that he regarded his Soviet companion from now on as a possible opponent, far from trying to make him more amenable by brandishing this terrible weapon as a possible threat,

Truman confined himself to mentioning it to him 'incidentally', without dwelling on it. 'The United States,' he said simply, 'possessed an extraordinarily powerful weapon.' Had Stalin been told by his intelligence sources – it is possible that he had some even among the team of atomic scientists working in the United States – or did he underestimate the importance of the information? He replied only by expressing the hope that good use would be made of the new weapon against Japan. And no more was said about it.

The Soviets were therefore filling up their own the huge power vacuum which had been left in Europe by the collapse of Hitler's dreams. Certainly France was in no position to provide a counter-balance – quite the contrary, for General de Gaulle was playing the card of Soviet friendship in order to stand up to the dominance of the British and Americans, which bitter experience had taught him could be all too heavy. In these circumstances, what else should Stalin do but lay down the law and be prepared, if he did not obtain complete satisfaction, to create a *de facto* situation which would be irreversible and which his partners would one day be reluctantly forced to accept?

So it was with Poland. The discussion as to where her western frontier was to lie – on the western or the eastern Neisse – which had not been settled at Yalta, soon turned out to be purely a matter of form at Potsdam. Stalin revealed that 'he had not been able to prevent the Poles from taking over the administration of the area up to the western Neisse'. Truman and Churchill vainly protested that a fifth occupation zone had thus been set up and Churchill deplored the fact that Germany was deprived of her 'source of wheat'. The Poles pleaded – and on this point there was agreement between Bierut of the Lublin Committee and Mikolajczyk of the London government – that the ethnic and economic balance of Poland required her to expand into this region, otherwise she would have a smaller surface area than in 1939. One indisputable argument was that 8 million Germans had been, or were in the process of being, expelled. All that Truman and Attlee could do now was to accept the situation; their only resource was to postpone the question of the final definition of the frontier until the Peace Conference. This made no difference to the actual situation; since the German territories which the USSR had handed over to a Polish administration under the protection of the Red Army lay outside the scope of the Interallied Council responsible for the administration of Germany, did they still belong to Germany or were they now part of Poland? No one thought it wise to clear up this legal point; the evasiveness of the British and Americans was ill-disguised by their humanitarian concern that the population should be transferred 'in an orderly and humane way'. Besides, this was asking a great deal of the Poles and the Czechs, whom the Germans had been oppressing and exploiting for the

last five or six years. In the meantime Bierut rejected as an insult any idea that the Polish elections should be under international supervision.

Since matters had not reached breaking-point on the more serious problems, the Big Powers had no great trouble in reaching agreement on matters of minor importance: the Austrian occupation zones and the organisation of free elections, which did actually take place; the evacuation of Iran, after a period of time; the opening of Russo-Turkish negotiations for revising the Montreux Convention; and the maintenance of an international zone in Tangier. A few points of disagreement which they preferred to leave undecided were not pressed: the Soviet desire for part of the Italian colonies; Molotov's request that British action in the Near East should stop; freedom of navigation on all international waterways, to which, to everyone's amazement, Stalin was opposed; and Soviet policy in Rumania and Bulgaria, where Stalin waved aside Churchill's accusations as being mere 'fairy tales'.

The immediate interest of the Conference lay elsewhere. It was a question of deciding the fate of Germany in defeat and preparing for that of Japan.

#### IV THE FATE OF GERMANY

As far as rendering Germany harmless was concerned and the way to set about it, the Big Three were in agreement – if the British treatment of Doenitz betrayed that Churchill had had some ulterior motive at the back of his mind, he kept it well hidden. It was repeated that Germany would be decentralised, that a revival of democratic life would be encouraged at regional level and that, at the right moment, provincial authorities would be established through elections. It was something of a contradiction in terms to divide Germany up politically and then to say that she would form an economic unity; but the Americans were already taking action to prevent trade from coming to a standstill so that they would not find themselves obliged to make up the deficit in the trade balance of the occupied territories.

In order to prevent any fresh burst of desire for revenge, Germany would remain disarmed and demilitarised; all military and paramilitary forces would be dissolved and all arms and munitions of war would be handed over or destroyed.

Denazification would entail dissolving and barring all Nazi works and organisations and, more positively, by reinstating and putting into practice all the essential freedoms – freedom of speech, religious freedom and freedom for the trade unions. Although this whole programme was very clear as a statement of principle, it remained very vague when it came to carrying it out.

The Allies also intended that the Germans should be punished for the crimes of Nazism and that as far as possible they should make amends. It was decided that as soon as it was possible to identify all the offences, the war criminals – the Nazis, but also the military – should be brought before tribunals in the liberated countries. For the leaders of the Party and those holding posts of responsibility in the Wehrmacht, an Interallied Special Tribunal would be set up, with its seat in Nuremberg, consisting of four judges and four deputies. To this tribunal would be referred crimes against peace, war crimes or violations of the laws and customs of war, and ‘crimes against humanity’ – deportation, persecution and extermination.

So the German people were not being entirely dissociated from their leaders. They would need a long time to pay their debts – the reparations. This was one of the few problems dealt with in any detail at Potsdam. The Russians, moreover, had not waited for the meeting before helping themselves in their occupation zone; they were systematically dismantling factories and machinery so that they could transport the parts to the USSR and reassemble them there. This unilateral action was naturally recognised as their right – how could one prevent them? – and the Poles were also allowed to help themselves in the territories under their administration. But the Russians’ appetite – which was increased by their desire to restore the Soviet economy as quickly as possible – caused them to cast covetous eyes on their Allies’ zones. And after Yalta, at the Reparations Conference in Moscow, the Russians and Americans had crossed swords on two points: the Americans asked for exact statistics in order to work out correctly the total amount that they would demand, since the figure of 10,000 million dollars had been taken only as a basis for discussion; they were also opposed to making levies on current production while the German economy was still not strong enough to stand them. They were equally divided at Potsdam; but here again the Russians had shown that an ounce of practice was worth a pound of theory. It was decided that each power would satisfy its requirements by requisitioning in its own zone; in addition, the USSR would receive twenty-five per cent of the industrial equipment of the British and American zones. In such circumstances it was of little use stipulating that ‘the payment of reparations should leave the German people with enough resources to subsist without aid from outside’; this clause was a mere formality; someone had to help the Germans to their feet again, that is to say had to give them with one hand what was being taken away from them with the other, and who else could this be but the United States?

Now well launched, the Russians went on to ask if they could take part in the administration of the Ruhr which at Teheran Roosevelt had suggested should be internationalised. Molotov stated the Russian require-

ments very clearly: 2,000 million dollars worth of equipment from the region should be allocated to the USSR and the industrial investments of Rhein-Westfalen as well as its internationalisation should thus be shared exclusively among the Big Three. This time the USSR really was trespassing on her partners’ zones of influence. Since Stalin was still concerned with remaining in control in his own country, he thought it wise to withdraw this suggestion at the last sitting; had he persisted, he would surely have risked provoking his partners to meddle in the affairs of the Soviet zone of influence.

So Germany was going to have to pay, and pay a high price. The unfortunate experience of 1918 did not seem to have taught the Potsdam negotiators to exercise caution in that field. Neither were they greatly deterred by the obvious contradiction of demanding large amounts of goods from a country which was deprived of its means of production. Germany would pay, but which Germany, or which Germanies? Till now it had been intended that the Reich’s territory should be dismembered and the only question to be discussed was the number of parts and their boundaries. But since Yalta the USSR had changed her points of view; Gusev, her representative at the Special Commission in London, had indicated that the division of Germany was not an end in itself but merely a means of rendering her harmless. What was the explanation for this change in the Soviets’ attitude? Probably, as Castellán has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> the fact that the Politburo gradually realised the tremendous possibilities which the end of the war offered the USSR. Now that the German danger had been removed once and for all by the revival of Poland with her extended western boundaries (and therefore friendly to the USSR) and by the demilitarisation of the Reich, why not hold on to the great asset offered by Germany if she entered the Soviet orbit – a mutilated Germany, of course, but united and peaceful?

Accordingly, at Potsdam Stalin did not offer any opposition to setting up a German central government as suggested by Churchill, provided that it was controlled by the Allies; it was Truman who was against it. Provision was made only for ‘central administrative departments’ which would be more economic than political; secretaries of state would thus control finances, transport, communications, foreign trade and industry.

For the moment, then, the real authority would belong to the Control Council formed by the Allied military leaders of the four occupation zones who would meet from time to time in Berlin. This was an unprecedented situation and a real leap in the dark. On the one hand the occupation zones had been determined by the advance of the Allied armies; they were completely without unity; on the other hand the four Allies were going to

1. G. Castellán, ‘La politique allemande de l’URSS’, *Revue de l’histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale*, January and April 1956.

be forced to settle complex problems by unanimous agreement at the very moment when their relationship was beginning to be marred by growing mistrust and misunderstanding which were soon to become a permanent state of affairs.

The Potsdam negotiators, and particularly the Americans, were not unaware of the disadvantages or even the dangers of this situation. But they all thought that this makeshift solution would be only temporary. The task of preparing a permanent peace treaty was given to the Foreign Ministers; the Germans would be forced to accept it but would play no part in the negotiations; it would automatically bring about the political unity of Germany. Unable to see how to overcome their present difficulties, the Allies were therefore postponing them until a later date, while being no clearer on how they would set about solving them in the future.

As at Yalta, the Potsdam negotiators separated feeling pleased with themselves. Truman told Forrestal 'that he did not find it difficult to get on with Stalin'; but according to Murphy he had apparently resolved never to meet the latter again. This contradiction reflects that of Russo-American relations at that time: the two Allies had successfully ended their war against their common enemy; now that the task was complete they were coming to realise what they had refused to contemplate up to then, namely, that a whole world divided them. Actually the first blow to the Potsdam agreements came not from the contracting parties but from General de Gaulle who had not been invited to the meeting. Indeed, he spoke out categorically against setting up any central administrative services again in Germany; he had not given up the idea of detaching the Rhineland and the Ruhr. The emotions aroused by the war were still running too high even for the prophets to foresee that if Germany ceased to exist, she would one day have to be reinvented.

#### V THE ULTIMATUM TO JAPAN

Since the Allies were still at war with Japan she was discussed at Potsdam solely as an enemy. Churchill was the only one to put forward the idea of leaving the opponent with 'some means of saving his military honour', but Truman replied that this honour had been lost for ever at Pearl Harbour, and Stalin was of the same opinion.

After Chiang Kai-shek had been consulted and given his approval, an ultimatum was sent to Japan, which was drawn up without consultation with France. The Japanese leaders were informed that their country would be 'neither destroyed as a nation nor reduced to slavery nor deprived of essential liberties'. But her armies would have to surrender unconditionally - the decisions which had been taken at Casablanca would

be carried out to the very last; otherwise 'she would lay herself open to complete and utter destruction'. There was no chance of this allusion to the atom bomb being understood by the Japanese. In July 1945 they were in serious and almost desperate straits; but no one knew how much longer they would go on fighting nor how they could be forced to stop. These apprehensions were not unfounded; although the Japanese fleet and Army had been defeated many times since Midway, they had nonetheless continued to fight tooth and nail.