

ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Monthly



Vol. VII No. 1

January, 1944

The Month in Focus

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The Conference at Teheran

THE importance of the Teheran meeting lies mainly in the simple physical fact that the three leaders met together for the first time. It was the seventh conference meeting for Prime Minister and President. It was the second for Churchill and Stalin: Mr. Churchill had met in conference with Stalin in August, 1942, when he went to Moscow to tell the Russian leader that the western allies could not open a second front in Western Europe that year. But at Teheran, for the first time, the three men were brought together for an all-important exchange of views and making of plans. The weight of official work was somewhat relieved by what seems to have been a convivial celebration of Mr. Churchill's 69th birthday.

Two official communiques were issued from the Teheran conference. Both were dated at Teheran, December 1, 1943. In one, the governments of the U. S. A., the U. S. S. R. and the United Kingdom expressed the desire to maintain "the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran," and the intention to "continue to make available to the government of Iran such economic assistance as may be possible, having regard to the heavy demands made upon them by their world-wide military operations." The other communique had to do with cooperation among the governments of the great powers in the prosecution of the war and the establishment of peace.

This second communique was couched, as was to have been expected, in general terms. A short paragraph dealt with war plans. In it, two points stand out: one—and an obvious one—is that these particular three powers concerted their plans for action against Germany; since Russia is still neutral in the Japanese war, nothing was said about any eventual Russian operations against Japan. The other, is that complete agreement was reached "as to the scope and timing of operations which will be undertaken from the east, west and south" of Europe. This agreement would seem to lay at rest the whole "second front" problem over which public opinion of the three countries has frequently been so exercised.

There is nothing new in the Teheran statement that operations "will be undertaken from the east, west, and south." Mr. Churchill made no bones about the prospect of such a three-sided attack on Europe when he spoke to the House on September 22, referred to operations in Italy as constituting a "third front," and said that the "second front" against western Europe was al-

ready potentially in existence. Of course, the southern or "third front" may be expanded beyond present operations in Italy, and the "second front" in western Europe may be established at more than one point,—but the fact remains that in broad strategical concepts there was nothing new in the Teheran communique about attacking Germany from three sides.

War Plans Against Germany

The new item in the paragraph on the war has to do with the agreement on the "scope and timing" of these three-sided operations. The Russians have long held that they could not effect a real break-through of the German lines in Russia until 50-60 German divisions had been withdrawn from the Russian front to meet allied offensives in other parts of the continent. The allied invasion of Italy, with its attendant threat to the Balkan peninsula, has not met the conditions of such an offensive. Only some 30 to 35 German divisions are engaged or held down in Italy and the Balkans, and these were not withdrawn from the Russian front. It would appear, therefore, that agreement as to the "scope" of future allied offensives means agreement in the main on the opening of the "second front" in western Europe. And this would mean, if Russian conditions have been met, as they probably have, that operations against western Europe will be on a scale sufficiently large to engage successfully enough German divisions to bring about the desired reduction of German strength on the Russian front.

And agreement as to the "timing" of new offensive operations is likewise significant. There is reason to believe that Russia has staked much on a fairly early conclusion of the war in Europe. She has asked, for instance, that in the matter of lend-lease and other aid heavy priority be given to weapons of war rather than food. One competent observer has interpreted this to mean that Russia intends to meet her needs in food for the immediate future largely from her own resources and by hard rationing and that she is counting on an early victory to relieve the food shortage that her people have experienced for more than two years of war. So, agreement on the "timing" of operations in the west and south may mean that they will be undertaken soon, and will be coordinated with a new and great offensive by the Russian armies.

The statement of the communique as to cooperation in peace repeats previous expressions of the same senti-



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ment and resolve. Indeed, it was anticlimax, following as it did the Joint Four-Nation Declaration issued a month earlier, on November 1, by the Moscow Conference. That four-power declaration, in which China participated, was at once more comprehensive and more specific with regard to postwar organization than the brief, general statement of the Teheran communique. Also, the Statement of Atrocities, signed by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin and made public on November 1, went further in dealing with at least one aspect of the German problem than did anything to be found in the Teheran statement of December 1.

Furthermore, the Moscow Conference arranged for the setting up of machinery to deal with various postwar European problems. Such machinery is to be seen in the Advisory Council of European Affairs now established in London, and the Advisory Council in Italy. These two councils presumably supplement the Mediterranean Commission which was set up, at the suggestion of Stalin, after the Quebec Conference of last August.

In short, then, it may be said on the basis of available official sources that the Teheran Conference dealt primarily with the planning of military operations to be taken against Germany in the near future, and, secondarily, reviewed and continued discussion of political matters already brought under consideration at the Moscow Conference.

The Conference at Cairo

The Cairo Conference, which preceded that of Teheran, dealt, of course, with the prosecution of the war against Japan. It was the second conference devoted primarily to this consideration, the first one having been held at Quebec in August. The presence of Generalissimo Chiang at Cairo was a fitting sequel to the participation of China in the Quebec Conference through the person of the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, and to the participation of China in the Four-Power Declaration of Moscow, through the person of the Chinese Ambassador to Russia. The Quebec Conference had discussed in broad outline the matter of intensifying the war against Japan. It had arranged for the establishment of a new Southeastern Asiatic Command under Lord Louis Mountbatten. Since September, the new commander had been exploring the situation in the area under his command, and presumably brought with him to Cairo conclusions reached as a result of these explorations. At Cairo, then, the military staffs were in a position to work out details for further multiple pressures on Japan's extended empire. Inasmuch as pressures from the north, central and southwestern Pacific were already a fact, greatest consideration must have been given at Cairo to the means of developing new pressures in Japan from China and from southeastern Asia.

The Cairo Communique was quite specific as to the fate in store for Japan's empire after her military and naval strength shall have been crushed. It stated that

Japan shall be stripped of the empire she has gained since her war with China in 1894. This involves the loss of her island holdings in the Pacific, and the loss of Manchuria, Korea and occupied portions of China. Korea is to be given independence "in due course," a phrase and condition against which Korean spokesmen already have protested with some reason. Manchuria is to be returned to China. No mention was made in the Cairo Communique as to the fate of the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong.

It seems reasonable to assume that this statement on the distribution of territory to be recovered from Japan was made with Russian knowledge and approval. Technically, and by reason of her official neutrality in the Japanese war, Russia had nothing to do with the Cairo statement; but practically, approval of the statement by Russia was indispensable to its effectiveness and political value. If this assumption is correct, it means that Russia has agreed to the return of Manchuria to China. Such agreement would be in accord with previous Russian statements regarding Russian territorial claims and ambitions.

Russia has not yet withdrawn her claims to the territory on her European frontier which she was occupying when attacked by Germany in June, 1941. This territory includes Bessarabia, eastern Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, and a piece of Finland. But on more than one occasion, Stalin and Foreign Commissar Molotov have stated that beyond these territories on Russia's western border, Russia has no territorial claims and ambitions. By these statements, Russian leaders renounced any claim to Manchuria, a vast province which, according to the intent of the Cairo Communique, is to be restored to China. In this particular, then, Russian statements accord with the three-power statement from Cairo.

In comparing the communiqués issued respectively from Cairo and Teheran, one is struck with the specific provisions in the one for the redistribution of territory now held by Japan and the absence of such specific provisions with regard to territory now occupied by Germany. A ready explanation of the difference is that agreement in one case was easy and in the other case difficult. And this explanation finds support in the fact that it has been found advisable to set up two Advisory Councils and one Commission to ponder upon the settlement of European problems. It is noteworthy, too, that what many consider to be knotty problems of a settlement in Asia and the Pacific were not dealt with in the Cairo Communique. Some of these knotty problems are those concerning the fate of Hong Kong, of former French Indo-China and of the various islands of the Pacific which had been held by Japan under mandate.

It may be said then, in conclusion, that at Cairo and Teheran, as formerly at Washington, Casablanca and Quebec, the great emphasis was on matters concerned with winning the war. But that at Cairo and Teheran, and including the earlier tripartite conference of foreign secretaries at Moscow, a substantial beginning was made toward the solution of political problems growing out of the war and the allied victory which will follow. It is only a beginning, and as such is not sufficient to please all sections of public opinion. The really difficult problems have not been solved, but at least there is assurance that they are being studied. Compared with the situation on the eve of Christmas, 1942, the situation 12 months later is bright. Allied achievement during the year on both military and political front has been considerable and bears in itself the promise of still greater achievement not far ahead.

DECEMBER 15, 1943.