

# CURRENT MAGAZINES

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## THREE GREAT CONFERENCES

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Ourselves and Russia—Viscount Castlereagh, in *The Spectator*.

The Promise of Moscow—Editorial in the *New Republic*.

Anglo-Russian Relationship—Sir G. Young, in the *Contemporary*.

The Moscow Conference—Editorial in *Time and Tide*.

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A FEW days before the Report of the Moscow Conference was issued, President Roosevelt roused the most sanguine expectations by announcing "a tremendous success". This turns out to have been no over-statement. Enemy critics who called it propagandist exaggeration, and friendly critics who suspected it to be wishful thinking, were alike mistaken. So much in general is agreed.

But it is time for estimates in detail. Two months have now passed since the decisions of the Conference were made public. How far have discussions since then, in the great magazines, shown the degree, the variety and the proportions of the success?

### I

Most important of the results is this: the Conference has extinguished Germany's hope of a split between Russia and her British-American Allies.

Not, indeed, in the sense that it has proved the rumors of such discord to have been groundless. Nothing can prove that, to those who watched the press of the three countries during the previous six months. They remember how often the dispute about "Second Front" seemed on the point of becoming a quarrel: how British and American enthusiasts for the Polish Government-in-Exile elicited Russian warnings that London and Washington had no more concern with fixing the Russo-Polish frontier than Moscow with rectifying the boundaries of California or determining the status of Eiré. There was probably much exaggeration in the stories, spread with such zeal from Berlin, about Mr. Stalin's anger at the establishment of "Amgot" in Sicily, because it meant British-American management, in which Russia was ignored. Still less serious was the rumor

that Soviet policy now includes Russian occupation of the Dardanelles. But there was some fire where it was possible to keep up even the appearance of so much smoke, and the Soviet policies for Central Europe had diverged so plainly, so sharply, so often, from policies either British or American that it was quite reasonable for Germany to pin her hopes to yet another split. She remembered how Britain and France had fallen out after the victory of 1918, and drew most sanguine inference from the fact that the recent manifesto of exiles for a "Free German" movement had been sent out from Moscow. No doubt it was wishful thinking to infer that Mr. Stalin had prompted this. But it was plausible, and the conjecture was by no means that of Germans alone. A writer so earnestly on our side as Miss Dorothy Thompson saw reason here to think that the Soviet leaders were in favor of negotiating peace with some non-Nazi German spokesman. Though Mr. Stalin had definitely adopted the term "unconditional surrender", it was pointed out that he had used it only once, many months ago, and one very influential columnist professed somehow to know that he had used it "hesitantly". All such insinuations are now dispelled. Russia has signed an announcement in unmistakable terms that "unconditional surrender" is the only offer from the enemy to which she will listen.

So here is an end of the dream that an acceptable non-Nazi German might be heard at Washington or London, with a plea like that of Darlan for France, or that of Badoglio for Italy. Some had guessed that it might be Herr Schacht. One German exile in this country, who ought to be a shrewd judge, startled me with the forecast—"It might be von Papen"! The Moscow Conference Report reduces sharply the likelihood that *anyone* will try it for some time. A simultaneous warning is there given to British or Americans whose well-known "generosity in the hour of triumph" is among the qualities which the Hitler circle is no doubt already preparing to exploit. The Report intimates to them that to propose any manner of negotiation with German representatives professing anti-Nazi sentiments is to resist the purpose deliberately adopted by our British and American and Russian leaders. These leaders have exchanged pledges that they will support one another to the very end in compelling German acceptance of the settlement that the Allies dictate. Mr. Joseph Davies quickly called this announcement equal in fighting value to one hundred fresh divisions in the field.



## II

The Conference at Moscow had a sensational sequel when, at Teheran, Mr. Stalin attended in person. That he was there for real business became clear as new policies developed, far and fast, after the interchange—short but surely productive—was complete.

It is no doubt idle to speculate on the respective parts which were taken in shaping a programme, especially a war programme, by different members of a conferring group who met behind locked doors. Those who know what happened on such an occasion will not divulge it, and the "solidarity" always demanded from members of a Cabinet, once the corporate decision has been reached, is imperative most of all in war. But though those responsible for action must thus refuse either to affirm or to deny guesses as to what they respectively favored, there is no reason why observing critics may not guess, and it may even be a help to a wholesome public opinion that they should do so. Only in such exercise of interpretation are the salient facts made known. And this time we have abundant material.

What writers in the Reviews since the Teheran meeting have chiefly emphasized has been, first, the acceleration of plans for invading the continent of Europe. This project, on which a too eager discussion had been so often deprecated in official British and American quarters, became suddenly advertised with extraordinary detail—including the announcement of the name of the Commander-in-Chief and of the subordinate commands which had been settled. One could not help recalling how the Moscow press had repeatedly urged more speed in this matter, and one was not surprised at the report, which became almost immediately current, that it was Mr. Stalin who insisted on the definite naming of commanders.

Next, one noted signs that in the all-important Balkan area the Russian policy had begun assimilating British and American policy to its likeness. Notoriously from London and Washington favor had been markedly shown to General Mikhailovitch and the "Yugoslav Government-in-Exile", while Moscow had favored (and tremendously helped) General Tito and the "Partisans". Was it not suggestive that so soon after the Teheran meeting British and American aid was promised without stint to the Partisans, and that Tito's expert advisers were reported to have met with experts of the Allies, Mikhailovitch being unrepresented. Inevitably, too, the Conference at Cairo, which

came so closely upon the heels of the one at Teheran, and at which Turkish spokesmen proffered aid previously undreamed of to our cause, recalled the close *entente* between Turkey and the Soviet Union. It was unthinkable that the ruling spirits at Ankara would take such risk (especially since German garrisons were again in control of the Dodecanese Islands) without a very strong suggestion from Moscow. And it happened so soon after Mr. Stalin had been to Teheran!

These successive Conferences ought to prove most fruitful in that area of South-Eastern Europe where a painful sterility had been too clear. It is an open secret that there has been disappointment over the slowness of the Italian civil population to cooperate with our invading and "liberating"? armies. But this has been no surprise to those best able to judge. The striking book lately off the press by Professors Salvemini and La Piana, entitled *What to Do With Italy*, put it well. "Our wise men in Washington", we there read, "and the American press which follows in their wake, have been convinced that British and American armies landing in Italy will be welcomed by the Italians with triumphal arches, waving flags, and streets strewn with flowers. The Italian people are in no mood to justify this unwarranted optimism of our press." And this lukewarm Italian spirit has had its counterpart in other parts of the troubled Balkan area. No one can read the manifestoes of exiles from South East Europe without noting their constant suspicion that somehow the victory of the Allies may turn out to have done little for the cause of freedom they themselves have at heart.

They are haunted by misgiving that some Badoglio or some Mikhailovitch will enter, with "Amgot" support into the heritage at Rome and Belgrade. Such fears are, no doubt, overdone. Every time they see a Peyrouton or a Giraud preferred, for immediate military reasons, to a De Gaulle in the councils of the Allies, they think that "Western Imperialism" is betraying democracy again. News that President Roosevelt had rebuked the American Office of War-time Information for speaking disparagingly of King Victor Emmanuel set going a flood of conjecture. And as often as there is an editorial in some great British or American organ about how the Balkan States might easily fall into chaos unless the strong hand of Yugoslav or Italian monarchy is stretched out against Communists and Reds, this sinister guessing is stimulated. German agents are quick at such a time to warn the guerilla fighters "You are sacrificing yourselves for a shadow." It is here that Marshal



Stalin's voice can make all the difference. Nobody suspects him of imperialist greed for Balkan territory, or of tender regard for the monarchist principle, or of sensitiveness to alarm about a Communism from which only such as Badoglio or Mikhailovitch can protect civilization. Is not this the reason why one by one—Yugoslavs, Czechoslovaks, and (marvellous to relate) even some Poles—have shown such a drift towards preferring a Russian to a British or an American guarantee?

## III

The more naive (who are also often the more self-confident and the more passionate among us) still from time to time protest that we should "get on with the war" and leave projects of post-war reconstruction to a later date. Truth to tell, as Mr. Stalin at least very fully realizes, the inspiration of a post-war programme is among the greatest forces for winning the war, and doubt about it has been among the chief obstacles in the way. What we particularly need is to clear out of the minds of sceptics the thought that in the coming reconstruction the mood known five years ago as "Appeasement" will reappear. The mood we sometimes call "Munich-Mindedness"! From the three great Conferences—at Moscow, at Teheran, and at Cairo—one may hope much towards abatement of that haunting anxiety. For it is an anxiety that has been widespread, and to dispel it would be service of the first order to our war effort.

Munich-Mindedness was not, indeed, so black as it is sometimes painted. What was done in those closing days of September, 1938, has often since been as extravagantly abused as it was then senselessly extolled. Multitudes who exclaimed "Thank God for Chamberlain" were no less sincere or generous than those who spoke in horror about "conducting Britain through shame to tragedy". Appeasement was a folly of leadership, not of the rank and file. At no time did the British people as a whole even play with the project that the name "Munich" must now forever call to mind—the project of buying self-protection from an international brigand by conniving at his pillage elsewhere. There was a blaze of public anger when it was realized that such had indeed been the spirit of the negotiation, and that "peace in our time" had been but a bribe by which a gangster had immobilized his future victim while his immediate victim was being despatched. Foreign policy was still, in the fall of 1938, far outside the ken of the average Englishman, and though he meant well, he was easily confused about it. Particularly as he was deluged with appeals to his remorseful conscience

—about the selfish cruelties in the *Treaty of Versailles*, and about Hitler's wish to "give Germany back her self-respect"! Though the Abyssinian affair in 1935, the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, and the seizure of Austria in the spring of 1938 might well have set the average Englishman on his guard, such was his habit of deference to the Foreign Office, coupled with distrust of his own judgment on these intricate and far-distant continental matters, that his trustfulness remained even when Neville Chamberlain spoke with rapture of the service rendered at Munich to the cause of world peace by Benito Mussolini!

The picture I have drawn of the average Englishman is one which, unfortunately, did not commend itself to Mr. Stalin. One needs to know England as the insurgent Georgian (who had never been outside Russia's territorial limits) could not know it, in order to realize how such mental keenness in other matters could be combined with such detachment from "foreign policy". Mr. H. G. Wells, who knows his own countrymen so intimately, has dwelt upon their naive confidence that "somebody up there" (that is to say, at the Foreign Office) must be watching things, and that if the government's action abroad seems puzzling, it is so because the government has good reasons which it cannot disclose to the plain man. Mr. Stalin adopted a simpler, and less charitable, theory of English public opinion. To him it could, at the utmost, merely palliate the guilt of the Munich Pact that one should assume this blind following of leadership. It left at least the stark fact that the British people could be misled with appalling ease, and to that fact Russian policy must adjust itself. Moreover, Marshal Stalin did not believe that British public opinion was so subservient to leadership. He remembered the ferocity of anti-Soviet passion in British cities, which—for example in 1924—had swept a resisting Labor government out of office. He recalled his own proposal that the Powers endangered by Hitlerism should confer, and the abrupt reply from London that this would be "inopportune". He thought of the exclusion of Russia from the interchange at Munich, and the repelling of his own offer of Russian aid in the Czechoslovak crisis. With irresistible force there came back to him his old conviction that "the capitalist Powers" were in league, with destruction of Soviet Russia as their ultimate purpose, and the Munich bargain took its place in his mind as but another step on the part of "counter-revolutionary world capitalism". How fatally the language of that period, in Neville Chamberlain's England,



in Georges Bonnet's France, in Josef Beck's Poland, lent itself to this Moscow interpretation!

At length the cloud seems to have been cleared away. Mr. Eden's emphasis on the difference in mood, still more than on any difference in agreed policy, which the Moscow Conference disclosed drew attention to the all-important point. The Russian, like the British and American, purpose is declared to be nothing narrowly national; it is the reestablishment of international order and good faith, and in that cause all three allies trust one another to the utmost. If President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill no longer construe Russia in the light of the Comintern of twenty years ago, there is a like cancelling in Mr. Stalin's mind for memories of five years back about "the capitalist Powers" at Munich.

May nothing happen to disturb the mood of amnesty on either side.

#### IV.

The Teheran announcement, when it was given to us in full text, had no surprises in what it *contained*, but some readers were considerably surprised at what it left out. For what, then, did they look? They expected it to resemble the announcement a few days before from Cairo, setting forth for Germany—as that manifesto had set forth for Japan—what ill-gotten gains she would be required to give up. Or, again, they expected an *ultimatum*, with a time-limit, bidding the German people to surrender or perish. I think if the Report had emphasized either of these matters, or had emphasized them both, it would have been more agreeable to the Hitler circle than the Report they got. As it stands, it says not a word about conditions, however severe. It declares that Germany as a world Power is to be altogether disabled; that the plans for carrying this out are complete, and that after the decisions taken at Teheran by British, Russian and American leaders (each advised by his own experts) there is no shadow of doubt it can be done. From East, West and South the irresistible attack is to be launched, and anything like bargaining is never named: it is not merely dismissed; it is ignored as irrelevant.

This is not what was done in the case of Japan. It is not what was done in the case of Italy. Japan was told she must retire to her original islands, giving up such and such territories she had seized and held: this at least meant that, when so limited, she would remain an independent Power. Italy had

been assured that once Fascism was swept away, there would be not only indulgence but cooperation by British and Americans and Russians to restore the free democratic constitution which Fascism had defaced. Germany is given no corresponding assurance. Her fate is left quite unindicated, except for this—that as a military Power she will be destroyed beyond all chance of recovery; the allies that are about to finish her will remain allies to keep her thus finished. Such is the doom which bears the three signatures—Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin. Think what it meant for the German people to find that third name signed to this terrible document! Their hopes and fancies, looking—as Lord Halifax said—for issues on which the allies might be divided and estranged from one another, were shattered at a stroke. Such was the Teheran announcement of complete unity and iron determination to execute very fast a doom upon Germany which will make it quite unimportant to her what afterwards happens in the places of which her publicists of late have written so movingly—in Poland, in Yugoslavia, in the Baltic States. How deep was her professed concern over designs of the United Nations there! And how little it will soon matter to her what, in such reference, is done!

Some readers have been puzzled by the prominence given in the Teheran statement to the case of Iran. The space covered by this assurance to the Iranian people was actually larger than that covered by the account of purpose towards Germany. What possible misunderstanding was this designed to obviate?

The purpose may well have been twofold. It was at the capital of Iran that "the Big Three" met, and that valuable ally had rendered conspicuous help, especially for the transport of American supplies through the Persian Gulf. The government of Iran had put its carrying system at the allies' disposal, and this had been most important for getting machinery to the Russian Front. But one neighbor of Iran is Iraq, another neighbor is Syria, and there are great oil resources in that region by which the cupidity of powerful States might be tempted. Especially Russia and Britain have long had sharply competitive interests there. At the close of the First World War there was much local suspicion that Lord Curzon, then British Foreign Secretary, was planning a British sphere of influence which would mean scant respect for Iranian national feeling. No doubt the trouble which had been experienced regarding "Mandates"—in Iraq, in Syria, in Palestine, in Lebanon—was having its effect in Iran, and it may well have seemed best to deal



with this in advance by a joint solemn commitment of the two great Powers immediately interested, with collateral signature of the third great Power which will share with them the capacity and responsibility for reconstructing the world. Hence the pledge to maintain what the Declaration calls "the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran". If any ultra-suspicious Iranian had in mind a coming announcement of one part of the country as a British and another as a Russian "sphere of influence", this is his answer.

It fits in, too, with the further pledge that all nations, large and small, which share the purpose of the allies to eliminate "tyranny, slavery, oppression and intolerance" will be welcomed in the post-war world to cooperate and participate in a family of democratic peoples. Mark the test. It is not a League, with a constitution so elastic as to admit all peoples, that is here foreshadowed. Not a combination with such easy terms of membership as that of 1919, into which any might enter and in which, having entered, each might do as it liked. The "democratic nations" are to form a world family. It would be invidious to specify which nations that requirement is meant to exclude. But it explains itself.

#### V.

One must not forget, in enthusiasm over European harmony, how much was settled at the Cairo Conference on Far Eastern matters.

It was intimated that not only must Japan restore the pillage she has collected on the mainland of Asia—returning Korea, Manchuria, North China to their lawful inhabitants—but she must likewise withdraw from those islands in the Pacific (the Marshall, Caroline and Mariana Islands) which she seized in the war of 1914-18 and has held ever since. These have lately figured in the news, because they have served her present design so notably as bases for attack on the United States. She got them under mandate, after the First World War, as trustee for the League of Nations. She has kept them for her own purposes, like a fraudulent trustee, for whom there is (as yet) no available court to compel an accounting.

Japan came into the First World War from one motive—the hope of territorial and industrial loot. For what we call the principles of international justice she then, as now, cared not in the least. If Japanese leaders in 1914 had any preference regarding affairs in Europe, it was for the German rather than

the British way of dealing with a people inferior in military strength. German instructors had developed their armed forces, and German ideas of the soldier as entitled always to override the civil authority were most congenial to the Japanese. True, they had in 1914 a Treaty of Alliance with Great Britain. But this could have been disregarded without the least compunction if it had suited their national interest to do so. Japan had broken such pledges before, and she has broken them repeatedly since.

Entering the First World War for what she hoped to get out of it in spoil, she calculated on the probability of the Entente Powers winning. In that event, if she were with them, there would be at least Shantung (Germany's province of China) that she could insist on getting. Also the Pacific Islands, which had been under German control. But there was still more. There was the chance (amid world chaos and the preoccupation elsewhere of those European Powers which would normally have objected) that she might extort huge immediate concessions from the Republic of China. That was a Republic still largely on paper, born of the brain of Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen just three years before. The Manchu dynasty had fallen; the Republic was still in process of consolidation, and the habitual overseers of the Far East—Britain, France, Germany, Russia—all with their hands full, were a very long distance away. Perhaps the United States might demur to a Japanese attack on China? They calculated at Tokyo that the United States would be very slow to act against such an enterprize by force. If Japan were an active co-belligerent of Britain, France and Russia at the same time, Washington would be unlikely to interfere with what she might be doing, approved by these allies, against China. Anyhow, the risk seemed worth taking, and Japan in 1915 formulated her famous "Twenty-One Demands". They were such as would, if granted, reduce China to a state of vassalage. On American insistence—prompted by the infraction of American interests which some of the proposals would involve—there was some abatement of their rigor. But the submission exacted from a Power unable, under the circumstances, to resist was abject, and the precedent of this success was cherished at Tokyo, to be used later.

On the story of Japan's service to the cause of freedom and democracy in the First World War, this is perhaps sufficient comment. The service was diversified by an outrage of her own on that very cause—an outrage which nothing in German



aggression surpassed. It is a humorous tale that has to be told of her exploits in that war. Her fleet patrolled the Pacific and Indian oceans, keeping guard over Australia and India. It did so with the serenity of a sentinel who knows that an appearance of the enemy anywhere is in the last degree improbable. In her crusade for "international justice" she carried on such manufacture and sale of munitions to her allies at a high price as left her at the close of the war with a favorable balance of trade amounting to billions of dollars. She planned a raid for her own aggrandizement on the East Siberian coast of Soviet Russia, and but for stern American intervention would have carried it out. All this was her preliminary manoeuvring with what she now calls "the New Order": the same brutality, the same faithlessness, in a word the same Prussianism.

It is a reasonable ground for Canadian pride that the action of this country was the principal force by which Great Britain was released in 1921 from the dishonoring Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Cairo pledge is a pledge to complete the international purge which was then begun.

H. L. S.

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