



AROUND THE WORLD

EMPIRE AND TEHERAN

London (by wireless).

THE outcome of the conference of Dominions premiers with the British government in London represents a victory for the policies of international cooperation embodied in the Teheran decisions. The communique issued at the end of the conference is necessarily general in its wording and does not attempt to cover all the results reached or questions discussed. But the general conclusion is clear.

In order to judge correctly the significance of the conference it is necessary to examine its scope and the degree to which it was representative. The British Empire, or the Commonwealth and Empire as the official title now has it—to distinguish between the self-governing and non-self-governing portions—covers one-quarter of the earth and includes 530 millions of people, or about one-quarter of the earth's population. Seventy millions of these are constituted by Britain and the white self-governing dominions. The remaining 460 millions, or six-sevenths, are India and the subject colonial empire. The conference directly represented the governments of the white self-governing one-seventh. India was represented by Mr. Leopold Amery, head of the British department for India and Burma, the Maharajah of Kashmir, and Sir Feroz Khan Noon, a member of the Viceroy's council. The latter won fame in September 1942, when asked by a *Daily Herald* interviewer how many Indians support the government of India, by answering "I would say none." The colonial empire was represented by a scion of the British landed aristocracy, Mr. Oliver Stanley.

Despite this limited representative character, the conference in fact dealt with issues and took decisions covering the whole empire—that is, one-quarter of the globe. Hence it has considerable significance for world politics. For immediate purposes the conference was primarily a war conference meeting on the eve of the big offensive. This was its main practical purpose and value. The Dominions, as well as India and the colonies, have all participated in varying degree in the war effort. There was complete unanimity behind the war and behind the aims of the United Nations. The conference thus represented a strengthening of the world democratic front against fascism.

The main controversial issues of the conference turned on postwar prospects. What is to be the future of the British Em-

pire in the world family of democratic nations envisaged by the Teheran decisions? Is the British Empire to constitute a separate international political system pursuing its separate policy under its own governing and policy making authority within the future world system? Is it to constitute a closed economic system on the lines of the old Ottawa and imperial preference policies within the plans for world economic collaboration?

These are the issues which had to be faced. Two schools of thought revealed themselves in the preliminary discussion. One was the Smuts-Halifax school. Field Marshal Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, set the ball rolling by his speech in London last November when he spoke of the danger of Britain in isolation being dwarfed by an unequal partnership with the Soviet colossus and the giant power of the United States, and hence emphasized the necessity of developing the empire and extending it to include western Europe. Lord Halifax, the British ambassador to the United States, carried it a stage further when he launched a bombshell by his speech at Toronto in January of this year in which he said that in order to stand up to the titans represented by the USSR and the United States and China, not Great Britain alone, but the British Commonwealth and Empire must be the fourth power in this group—that is, that there must be some kind of centralized political

system of the empire, speaking with one voice.

IN THE House of Commons debate preceding the conference some Tory MP's, as well as some Labor MP's like Emanuel Shinwell, made aggressive speeches along similar lines with a challenging note to the United States and the Soviet Union. But the main body of opinion in the Dominions, especially in Canada, and responsible democratic opinion in Britain recognized the danger of this approach. Mr. Churchill in the Commons debate gave specific warning against proposals for closer empire unity which might militate against the larger loyalty to the Teheran decisions for a world association. While he declared that Britain retained a free hand in relation to imperial preferences, he clearly implied, as Cordell Hull recognized in his subsequent comment, that this was not necessarily a fixed policy, but rather a bargaining weapon which might be modified in relation to a lowering of United States tariffs in the interests of international economic agreements.

Mr. Mackenzie King, the Liberal premier of Canada, was the most outspoken protagonist of the alternative view to the Smuts-Halifax policy. He declared bluntly of Lord Halifax's proposals: "I do not agree with them." And in the Canadian House of Commons last January he went behind the conception expressed by Halifax and Smuts and said that in it "there lurks the idea of inevitable rivalry between the great powers. I maintain that such a conception runs counter to the establishment of effective world security." The Labor premiers of Australia and New Zealand also stood firmly for the Teheran principles of world security with the four-power collaboration of Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China.

Although Mr. Curtin for Australia suggested the possibility of closer empire consultation through more frequent conferences and some possible new machinery such as an empire secretariat, in the outcome it is clear that the internationalist thesis represented most strongly by Mackenzie King has fully triumphed over any isolationist thesis which might endanger Teheran. It has been recognized that there can be only one basis for a single foreign policy of Britain and the Dominions: the basis of fulfillment of the Teheran decisions. No new machinery was established. No hard and fast decisions were taken. Mr.



Curtin's proposals for an empire secretariat were not followed up.

The official communique at the end of the conference declared for the aim of freedom for all the world, for a world organization to maintain peace and security, and further declared that tyranny and aggression shall be removed or, if need be, struck down wherever they raise their heads. Mackenzie King, addressing the assembled Houses of Parliament, said that "if at the close of hostilities, the strength and unity of the Commonwealth are to be maintained, these ends will be achieved not by policies which are exclusive but by policies which can be shared with other nations." No nation or group of nations, he went on to say, can in isolation ensure its own prosperity. He welcomed the spirit of Mr. Churchill's final declaration at the close of the parliamentary debate preceding the conference that out of the ruins of war there will arise a world structure in which there will be room for all free associations of a special character so long as they are not disloyal to the world cause.

The conference did not officially deal with the question of India, but the point of view, especially of the governments of Australia and New Zealand, has been made clear on the urgency of a settlement in India. And as the *London Observer* wrote on May 14, "the Commonwealth conference cannot end without some friendly discussion of India." It was noted that the release of Ghandi on May 6 took place during the proceedings of the conference. Although only a first step, there are fresh possibilities for a new approach and negotiations to strengthen Indian national unity and prepare the way for a settlement with Britain on the basis of an Indian national government as an ally of the United Nations.

The London conference was a landmark not so much by any positive new decisions as by its firm loyalty to the Teheran decisions. The self-governing peoples of Britain and the Dominions have a great opportunity and responsibility today both in the magnificent effort which they are putting forward in the common cause for victory over fascism and in promoting the fulfillment of the wider aims of international cooperation and the advance of democracy and national freedom among all the peoples in the empire.

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