

The Prinkipo Conference Plan

An Attempt to Arrange a Meeting Between Delegates of the Allies and of Russian Factions

EARLY in January, 1919, the British Government submitted a proposal to the French Foreign Office that an invitation be dispatched by wireless to the Soviet Government at Moscow, to General Kolchak at Omsk, to General Denikine at Ekaterinodar, to M. Tschaikovsky at Archangel, as well as to all the other Governments appointed by the various Russian nationalities, for the declaration of a truce among the different contending factions during the period of the Peace Conference. In the event that the Soviet and other Russian Governments accepted this invitation they might be allowed to send delegates to the Peace Conference.

The French Foreign Minister, Stephen Pichon, responded on Jan. 5 with a diplomatic note, declaring that, while the French Government acknowledged the generous English spirit of worldwide reconciliation, approval could not be given the suggestion, since it did not take into consideration the principles that still inspired the policies of the French and other allied Governments in Russia.

FORMER AMBASSADOR'S VERDICT

On Jan. 20 the Supreme Council gave a hearing to Joseph Noulens, the French Ambassador, who had just returned from Russia, where he had witnessed personally the changes that had taken place in Governmental and economic life. He summarized his views in the following authorized statement:

The Bolshevik power is the enemy of the Entente. It is responsible for the Russian defection from the Entente. It furnished Germany with food during the war. It protested against the terms of the German armistice. These acts show an uncompromising attitude of hostility against the Entente.

Tyranny and terror, which are increasing daily, should place the bloody chiefs at Moscow and Petrograd outside the pale of humanity. No society of nations could deal with such a régime, which constitutes today the most serious ob-

stacle to a general peace. Until the régime falls, which I hope to see the Allies actively undertake, Europe will continue to be exposed to the severest risks of agitation and war.

THE INVITATION SENT

On Jan. 22 the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference adopted a proposal laid before it by President Wilson for action regarding Russia. The plan adopted was that of sending a wireless message to the various Russian Governments, inviting them to send delegates to Princes' Islands, in the Sea of Marmora, to confer with allied representatives on Feb. 15. There are eight islands in the group chosen for this rendezvous, of which the largest and most beautiful is Prinkipo, a popular Summer resort, only twelve miles from Constantinople.

The text of the message sent was as follows:

The single object the representatives of the associated Powers have had in mind in their discussions of the course they should pursue with regard to Russia has been to help the Russian people, not to hinder them or to interfere in any manner with their right to settle their own affairs in their own way.

They regard the Russian people as their friends, not their enemies, and are willing to help them in any way they are willing to be helped. It is clear to them that the troubles and distrust of the Russian people will steadily increase, hunger and privation of every kind become more and more acute, more and more widespread, and more and more impossible to relieve unless order is restored and normal conditions of labor, trade, and transportation once more created, and they are seeking some way in which to assist the Russian people to establish order.

They recognize the absolute right of the Russian people to direct their own affairs without dictation or direction of any kind from outside. They do not wish to exploit or make use of Russia in any way.

They recognize the revolution without reservation and will in no way and in no circumstances aid or give countenance to any attempt at a counter-revolution.

It is not their wish or purpose to favor or assist any one of the organized groups now contending for the leadership and guidance of Russia as against the others. Their sole and sincere purpose is to do what they can to bring Russia peace and an opportunity to find her way out of her present troubles.

The associated Powers are now engaged in the solemn and responsible work of establishing the peace of Europe and of the world, and they are keenly alive to the fact that Europe and the world cannot be at peace if Russia is not. They recognize and accept it as a duty to serve Russia as generously, as unselfishly, as thoughtfully, as ungrudgingly as they would serve any other friend and ally, and they are ready to render this service in the way that is most acceptable to the Russian people.

In this spirit and with this purpose they have taken the following action: They invite every organized group that is now exercising or attempting to exercise political authority or military control anywhere in Siberia, or within the boundaries of European Russia as they stood before the war just concluded, except in Finland, to send representatives, not exceeding three representatives for each group, to Princes' Islands, Sea of Marmora, where they will be met by representatives of the associated powers, provided in the meantime there is a truce of arms among the parties invited and that all armed forces anywhere sent or directed against any people or territory inside the boundaries of European Russia as they stood before the war, or against Finland, or against any people or territory whose autonomous action is in contemplation in the fourteen articles upon which the present negotiations are based, shall be meanwhile withdrawn and aggressive military actions cease.

These representatives are invited to confer with the representatives of the associated Powers in the freest and frankest way, with a view to ascertaining the wishes of all sections of the Russian people and bringing about, if possible, some understanding and agreement by which Russia may work out her own purposes, and happy, co-operative relations be established between her people and the other peoples of the world.

A prompt reply to this invitation is requested. Every facility for the journey of the representatives, including transportation across the Black Sea, will be given by the Allies, and all the parties concerned are expected to give the same facilities. The representatives will be expected at the place appointed by Feb. 15, 1919.

This action of the Supreme Council produced a flood of protests from the

more conservative elements in Russia, and from the various factions fighting the Bolshevik régime. The council of the national and democratic bloc of Russian political organizations abroad sent a strongly worded protest to Premier Clemenceau against the decision of the Supreme Council to call a conference of the Russian factions. It read in part:

We would be men without honor and courage if we accepted for a single moment a truce such as proposed to us while all that are dear are in danger of death—violent death by execution or assassination or slow death through hunger. The interest of humanity in general and democracy in particular requires the establishment in Russia of a régime based on the sovereignty of the people freely expressed. An improvised meeting at the Princes' Islands cannot be an expression of this sort. Russia has long clamored for the free election of a Constituent Assembly. The attempt was stifled by the Bolsheviks by force of arms, and they are today asked to make the voice of Russia heard!

Nicholas Tschaikovsky, the head of the Northern Government of Russia, voiced the hostility of his Government to a compromise with the Bolsheviks, saying:

The suggestion that we other Russians should enter into negotiations for an accommodation with the Bolsheviks is impracticable, because we have no common ground with them. They deny every democratic principle that we affirm, fundamentally the liberty of the subject. There is only one settlement possible between us: either we prevail over them or they prevail over us.

The policy of the conference is not only useless, is not only impracticable, but it is humiliating to the representatives of Russia. We cannot enter into discussions with criminals and outrage-mongers. To do so would be to recognize Bolshevism as a party, or to recognize crime as a normal political weapon and to tolerate the loosening of the foundation of democracy.

Sergius Sazonoff, former Russian Foreign Minister, who represents the Governments of Ekaterinodar and Omsk at Paris, declared that he would not participate in the meeting with Bolshevik representatives proposed by the Supreme Council. He went further, making a plea on Jan. 24 that anti-Bolshevik Russians be allowed to raise a volunteer army in other European countries with the purpose of combating the Bolshevik régime and restoring order in Russia.

General Horvath of the Siberian Government, in discussing the invitation to Princes' Islands, declared on Feb. 1, at Vladivostok, that it would be impossible for the factions to reach an agreement with the Bolsheviki. The General said:

We cannot conclude an armistice with them, because it would be impossible to secure guarantees which would not be violated by the Bolsheviki.

The Omsk Government, under Admiral Kolchak, in its formal reply to the invitation, expressed strong reserve, while not indicating absolute rejection of the proposal.

The Government of Georgia, in Transcaucasia, responded on Feb. 3 with a declination to attend, on the ground that Georgia, like Finland, already had achieved her independence, and was no longer a portion of Russia.

The Lithuanian delegation in Paris, representing the whole of Lithuania in Russia, comprising a population of about 15,000,000, replied on Feb. 6 that they were ready to accept the invitation on condition of the indorsement of the principle by the Peace Conference of absolute autonomy and independence for Lithuania.

ESTHONIA ACCEPTS

The official reply of the Esthonian Government, made public Feb. 11, was as follows:

The Esthonian people, by the intermediary of its National Council, which springs from universal suffrage, determined to separate from Russia, and thereupon proclaimed Esthonia an independent republic. The Government has been provisionally recognized by the English, French, and Italian Governments. Not only does the Esthonian Government exert its authority independent of any Russian Government, but for three months, after having organized a regular army, it has been at war with the Russian Soviet communist republic.

Therefore, we in no wise consider ourselves a part of Russia, although we accept the invitation of the allied powers and of the United States to go to Princes' Islands. We believe that the participation of the representatives of Esthonia and of the communist republic of Russian Soviets is of importance to the future relations between Russia and the Esthonian Republic.

The Lettish Republic responded on Feb. 12 that it would send delegates to

the conference. The official text of the reply, in part, follows:

Although, from a political point of view, the provisional Government of Letvia is in a situation exactly similar to that of Poland and Finland, it finds itself, nevertheless, invited, according to an official declaration made by the Secretary General of the Peace Conference on Feb. 10. In the name of the provisional Lettish Government, the Lettish delegation has the honor to bring to the attention of the Peace Conference of Paris the following declaration:

"The provisional Lettish Government will send three delegates to Princes' Islands, provided that all armed forces sent or directed by Russia against the Lettish State be withdrawn from Letvia, and that all offensive military action cease.

"Letvia announces its separation from Russia, and announced, in January, 1918, at the Constituent Assembly of Russia, the Constitution of an independent and sovereign Lettish State.

"The Lettish delegation sent to the Peace Conference will participate in the conference at Prinkipo in order to:

"1. Make peace with Russia, this peace to be recognized by the great allied powers.

"2. Regulate, under the auspices of the great allied powers, the political and economic affairs as they result from the separation of Letvia and Russia.

"3. Make treaties in and take the necessary steps toward the establishment of States."

By Feb. 12 the Ukrainian Soviet Government announced that it was willing to accept the invitation of the Supreme Council to the conference at Princes' Islands. The Government of the Crimea also informed the Allies about that time that it was willing to send delegates to the meeting.

BOLSHEVIST ATTITUDE

On Jan. 25 M. Tchitcherin, the Bolshevist Foreign Minister, sent a wireless message to the Soviet representative in Sweden asking for confirmation of the proposal of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference to send a mission to confer with representatives of the different Russian factions at Princes' Islands. In his message M. Tchitcherin raised objections to the isolation of the islands as tending to surround the proposed meeting with secrecy, and also to leaving the choice of participants to the Entente.

Government, in a wireless message to the Entente Governments sent out from Moscow by M. Tchitcherin, announced that it was willing to begin conversations with the Entente with the object of bringing about a cessation of military activities. Moreover, it offered to guarantee the payment of interest on its debts by means of stipulated quantities of raw materials, and to place concessions in mines, forests, &c., at the disposal of citizens of the Entente, provided "the social and economic order of the Soviet Government was not affected by internal disorders connected with these concessions." The message added:

The extent to which the Soviet Government is prepared to meet the Entente will depend on its military position in relation to that of the Entente Governments, and it must be emphasized that its position improves every day.

The Supreme Council, on receiving the acceptance of the Russian Bolshevik

Government, immediately made arrangements to send a joint committee of two representatives from each of the five great powers to meet the representatives of the Soviet Government. On Feb. 7 William Allen White of Emporia, Kan., and Professor George Davis Herron were appointed the American delegates to the Marmora conference with the Russian factions. Other countries named the following delegates on Feb. 8: M. Conty, the French Minister to Copenhagen, and General Bampon, for France; Sir Robert Borden, Premier of Canada, and a military delegate, for Great Britain, and the Marquis della Torreta, former Ambassador in Petrograd, for Italy.

Meanwhile the Bolsheviki showed no signs of complying with the provision for a military truce, and the project had encountered so many other obstacles that the Peace Conference took up the whole question anew on Feb. 16, with a view to hastening the solution.

Armistice Extension

An Economic Council Added to the Commission and New Details Arranged

THE Supreme War Council devoted its sessions on Feb. 7, 8, and 9 to a discussion of the terms for a renewal of the armistice with Germany. Statements were made by Marshal Foch and other military leaders of France that the Germans had not complied with the previous terms, and urgent representations were made in favor of imposing new and more drastic terms and compelling their rigid execution. At the meeting of the council on Feb. 8 the following resolution, proposed by President Wilson, was approved:

First—Under present conditions many questions not primarily of military character, which are arising daily and which are bound to become of increasing importance as time passes, should be dealt with on behalf of the United States and the Allies by civilian representatives of these Governments experienced in such questions—finance, food, blockade control, shipping, and raw materials.

Second—To accomplish this, there shall be constituted at Paris a Supreme Economic Council to deal with such matters for the period of the armistice. The council shall absorb or replace all such other existing interallied bodies and their powers, as it may determine from time to time. The Economic Council shall consist of not more than five representatives of each interested Government.

Third—There shall be added to the present international permanent armistice commission two civilian representatives of each Government, who shall consult with the allied high command, but who may report direct to the Supreme Economic Council.

At a meeting of the Supreme Council on Feb. 10 M. Klotz, French Minister of Finance, presented documents of the German General Staff, published in 1916, showing a systematic plan to destroy French industry, not only as a military measure, but as a means to promote German industrial interests. These docu-