

In The Nation

Official Reporting Still by Indirect Discourse

By ARTHUR KROCK

WASHINGTON, May 31—Whenever Prime Minister Churchill has made a radio speech or an address to the House of Commons in which he has given in detail important news for the first time, the President has seemed to be fired by a spirit of emulation. This has usually followed American comment in which the reporting methods of this Government have been unfavorably compared with those of Mr. Churchill's.

But the period in which Mr. Roosevelt has been moved to good war reporting himself has generally been brief. And he has employed the press conference channel of informing the American public. This enables him to avoid direct quotation to whatever extent he may choose and without challenge withhold enlightening details. For under the rules governing White House press conferences the President controls the form in which his statements may be reported; and he can wholly forbid their repetition in print or on the air.

Last week, after Mr. Churchill had delivered a full budget to Commons of important war facts not before published, Mr. Roosevelt held a press conference at which some of his auditors thought him more communicative than he has been for some time. Yesterday, at a subsequent press conference, the President was similarly disposed.

The Prime Minister revealed to Commons a set of new facts on at least eight war situations of first importance. He announced that the effort to break Turkey's neutrality had been a failure. He conceded that the Allies had made mistakes in Italy after Mussolini's fall. He listed what he said were great improvements in Allied relations with Spain and said that Franco's policy of non-interference with the mobilization for the invasion of North Africa probably made that invasion possible.

Facts Hitherto Unknown

He said further that only enemy post-war Governments will be regulated by the victors; that Germany may be partitioned; that General de Gaulle, with the approval of the United States, has been invited to London for discussions looking to the day when France shall become the fourth member of "the grand alliance" of Great Britain, the United States and Soviet Russia. He told for the first time the story of the Greek mutiny in the Mediterranean, announced, that a British destroyer is to be presented to the new Greek Government, and informed Commons that Moscow has reversed its secrecy policy and recently allowed a British official group to see the whole Russian war-works.

But, most important of all, Mr. Churchill gave the outlines of a plan for keeping order in the post-war world; a Council and Assembly of the nations, in which force will probably be concentrated in the former and the whole structure will be founded on "fraternal associations" (for example, a British-Russian entente for the Continent and a United States-British Commonwealth entente for the rest of the world.)

This perhaps did more to lift the tight lid imposed on news by the President than anything else because Mr. Churchill was openly taking the lead in a field where the American people have been encouraged to think their own Government is foremost. At any rate, in his next two press conferences, Mr. Roosevelt released the following items of news:

He hopes to see the Prime Minister either this summer, this fall or late spring. He omitted mention of winter because he doesn't like north Atlantic winter weather. He will surely see Mr. Churchill before Jan. 20 (the day his present term expires), but would like to meet him in the late spring of 1945 "regardless."

White House Reporter

He has asked the representatives of forty-two countries to meet in New Hampshire next July to formulate proposals for an international monetary fund and perhaps a bank for international reconstruction and development.

He agrees with The Washington Post's suggestion that this is a war of "liberation" and therefore the invasion should be called the liberation. The planning for this is going awfully well. The Soviet Union is absolutely an active and satisfactory collaborator in this planning. The event will occur some time this summer. Our post-war reparations are far ahead of those we had made in 1918. Already many problems have been reduced to a first draft of conclusions.

Actually the Government has drafted a tentative form of organization for the United Nations as well as a suggested program for post-war security that will not dilute this nation's sovereignty. The draft states definite objectives and methods of carrying them out and is non-political in origin. For various reasons the plan avoids the faults of the old League, and the President already has discussed it with the British, the Russians and the Chinese.

All political groups have been consulted, and Congress, unlike 1919, has produced no "willful men"; the President has never found any; he hates nobody.

Taking issue with Mr. Churchill, Mr. Roosevelt does not believe that Spain has cut her exports to the enemy sufficiently to give satisfaction here or deserve praise.

The President endorses the idea of "free ports" for war refugees, but these need not be in the United States.

Such was Mr. Roosevelt's rival news budget. But he forbade those question marks which fix responsibility; he used the press conference relay, and the details that Mr. Churchill supplied in profusion were very few.