

Geo-Politics in our Time

By F. REDLER

IT is evident that the element of physical geography involved in the foundation of States has not been sufficiently emphasized, while the ethnological element has been too strongly pronounced. In fact, in much of the discussion it has been regarded as the determining, if not the sole, factor in their proper construction, while, as a matter of history, the other elements have always played a larger role."

This observation of Professor John W. Burgess in his standard book on "Foundations of Political Science", written in 1917 in the middle of World War I, anticipates one of the most common criticisms of the Paris peace conferences, where geographic considerations ranked so far behind all others that President Wilson and David Lloyd George almost prided themselves on their ignorance in the matter.

In densely crowded continental Europe "World Geography" always has been a romantic favourite amongst the subjects of learning, whereas in the Americas, where space was abundant and the "frontier" seemingly endless, it remained for some time a step-child of school-programs. Still more this holds true for that branch of geography which developed in the last 30 years under the name of Geopolitics. To people in whose outlook space is abundant, power politics, the worry about strategic borders, the bitter struggle for small parcels of land must appear meaningless, and geopolitics an utterly unholy science. The neglect of geographic matters, as Prof. Burgess pointed out, has influenced the American outlook on political science and international affairs.

Just as geo-politics dictated politics in Europe, it is dictating American politics: The security of the Western Hemisphere has become a function of the balance of power on other continents.

Geo-Politics Defined

While America was late and reluctant in facing the realities of power politics as a scientific proposition, the discovery of this new branch of science is wrongly attributed to the Nazis. In fact, only the term Geopolitics itself was invented by General *Haushofer*. Long before he established his "Institute of Geopolitics" in Munich, English geographers applied themselves in scientific research to the problems of space and power. Lord Curzon, the geographer, as Viceroy of India, traced the Northern frontier of that Empire according to his geopolitical theories and projected the borderline between Poland and Russia which has lately gained such posthumous fame. The real founder of geopolitics as a discipline of science, however, was the English geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder. All the fundamental theses of the *Haushofer* school are embodied in his publication *The Geographical Pivot of History* which appeared in 1907.

Mackinder's definitions of "World Island", "Heartland", "Crescents", "Mediterraneans", his confrontation of Landpower and Seapower, etc., have been taken over wholesale by the German school and form the more solid substance of their theories.

Mackinder predicted the rise of Russia as the world's greatest landpower: "He who dominates Eastern Europe dominates the World Island"—and foresaw the gigantic struggle now taking place on the plains of Europe and Russia; he foretold

the setback of seapower by landpower combined with airpower; he first proposed the exchange of populations as a means of settling border questions: Through the displacement of Germans from Eastern Prussia to Polish Posen and vice versa, he proposed at the time to ease Poland's precarious geopolitical position by granting her access to the Baltic sea without the need of a Corridor through the territory of the Reich.

What distinguishes geopolitics from simple geography? When Geography describes in general the earth as a place more or less suitable for human settlement, because of differences in climate, altitude and distribution of natural resources, Geopolitics is in particular concerned with the factor of security, pertinent to human settlement: Space and power, the changing significance of natural frontiers and man-made fortifications, the economic resources of a country under their aspect of "war-potential" (the ideal case being "autarky", that is a state of self-sufficiency which makes a nation independent of the natural resources of other countries); the geopolitician weighs the strength of nations and possible opposing coalitions in the "balance of power" and discusses the efficiency of political and strategic methods of warfare under given conditions.

Dynamism is the gospel of the geopolitician. "All is fluse". A new technical invention revolutionizes power relations in the world. The production of synthetic oil or rubber, for instance, increases the power of the country whose industrial organization allows its production on a mass scale, while it deprives of strategic importance the territories where the raw materials were processed so far. The same holds good for new weapons: the airplane, for instance, undermines the position of states whose might was built on the domination of sea communications.

The Nazis, of course, have melted this dynamism with that philosophy of moral nihilism of their own, which must not by necessity be associated with geopolitics. Man has no place in *their* system. The state itself is a living being which needs

space and power for its growth. History has but one meaning: The struggle for space and ever more space. No frontier is definite, no status-quo durable and justified, and no treaty more than a sheet of paper.

Present Implications

Stupendous changes are taking place in the established power relations on our globe. The first Allied statesman to talk openly about them was Field Marshall Smuts in his remarkable address before the Empire Parliamentary Association. He bluntly contended that "we cannot get away from the problem of power . . . Peace not backed by power remains a dream", implying that we need above all a new stabilization of the power factors in the world. The irrevocable decline of three once peaceful states, France, Germany and Italy is leaving a vacuum of power in Europe. This unique development is paralleled "by Russia's inexplicable rise, which we can only call one of the great phenomena of history, it; places her in a position which no country has ever occupied in the history of Europe . . . she will be the mistress of the continent".

"A trinity of power" formed by Great Britain, the United States, and Soviet Russia must become the new stabilizing factor of international relations. At the same time, Marshall Smuts avers that Great Britain in that combination is an "unequal partner". No reasonable balance of power can be achieved, unless the "next world-wide British system" is extended to the nations of Western Europe. Thus he pleads with the nations of Western Europe to choose "that grand company" for their future in this dangerous world and "to help themselves by helping to create a *great European state* which will be an equal partner with the other colossi in the leadership of nations".

General Smuts' "explosive" address had a truly tremendous repercussion in European as well as Commonwealth political circles. The European exile-governments in London, for obvious reasons, are in too precarious a position

as to feel entitled to definitely commit the future of their countries. There are many indications, however, that they are studying most seriously the implications of Smuts' proposal. A Belgian Minister has come forth with a statement to the effect that Belgium might be willing to become a member of the British Commonwealth. Dutch and Norwegian spokesmen, somewhat more reserved, wanted some assurance that such a constellation should enjoy the permanent support of the United States. The cordiality which marked Prime Minister Churchill's recent conversations with General DeGaulle may bring about a closer coordination between Great Britain and France, and perhaps an acceptance of Mr. Churchill's somewhat modified offer of 1940 through which defeated France was to associate her destinies with those of the British Commonwealth.

General Smuts undoubtedly has raised one of the most far reaching issues of our time. Europe, exhausted by two suicidal wars, will need some time before she can stand on her own feet again. In the meantime, history is challenging Great Britain and the Anglo-Saxon world to frame a political and economic system in which the European peoples can live in security and welfare, while maintaining the traditions which, for 2000 years, have made the greatness of the old continent.

Whereas General Smuts had singled out the future relationship between Great Britain and Western Europe, other British and Commonwealth statesmen broached the problem of strengthening the British position on the international scene through a closer unity of purpose and action among the member-nations of the Commonwealth. The motif is again, as Lord Halifax claimed in Toronto that "the British Commonwealth and Empire must be the fourth power in that group upon which, under Providence, the peace of the world will henceforth depend". Whereas public opinion in the Commonwealth nations of Africa and Asia on the whole expressed approval, Prime Minister Mackenzie King evidently felt it his duty to show the peculiar geopolitical position

of Canada: "Behind the conception expressed by Lord Halifax and Field Marshall Smuts, there lurks the idea of inevitable rivalry between the great powers. Could Canada, situated as she is geographically between the United States and the Soviet Union, and at the same time a member of the British Commonwealth, for one moment give support to such an idea?" . . . "Our commitments on these great issues must be part of a general scheme, whether they be on a world basis or regional in nature." In fact, Canada is vulnerable in every conceivable future conflict between the great powers. Her position resembles somewhat that which, in the past century, Belgium has occupied between France and Germany. As the most important among the smaller United Nations, Canada intends to follow an independent policy. And in any future crisis of world-power relations, she might likely try to adopt a line of strict neutrality, such as Belgium twice tried so unsuccessfully, but Switzerland, on the other with such remarkable success.

Discussion of the British position in a worldwide balance of power system was provoked by the emergence of new power concepts in other parts of the world scene. Soviet-Russia in her dealings with Poland has politely but firmly refused the good offices of her major Allies as an interference with what is considered her sphere of influence. Recent epochal changes in the Soviet constitution hold out tremendous potentialities which the U.S.S.R. may or may not use, depending on what circumstances—and especially the climate of her relations with the Western Allies—may be like. By granting to each of the 16 republics in the Soviet Commonwealth a status of autonomy extending even to sovereign foreign representation, Russia is setting a framework which might attract Oriental and Southern European as well as Middle Eastern countries like Iran to end their worries about security in a dangerous world of power politics by an apparently small sacrifice of national sovereignty. It is almost beyond imagination to assess the implication of a Russian system extending to the Adriatic and

Mediterranean seas and the Persian Gulf.

While Russia in the Polish question is acting on the assumption that Poland, owing to its geographic position, pertains to a zone in which she will not tolerate but friendly regimes, the older structure of the Pan-American system is also being put to the test by recent events. The pressure brought to bear upon Argentina to break with the Axis and the non-recognition of the Bolivian government reveals a trend, according to which the United States will not accept governments and regimes in South-America inimical to her interests in the Western hemisphere. Again a successful integration of the American continent would be of incalculable consequences on the rest of the world.

The technological and economic developments of this century unquestionably tend towards the integration of ever-greater economic and administrative units. In all parts of the world scene—"German-Europe" and Japan's "Greater Co-Prosperity Sphere" constitute, of course, the most extreme and ruthless examples—we are witnessing a rise of power politics in the sense that the predominant nation within a regional system is striving to mould a whole continent or at least vast territories into some economic and administrative unity.

The Hope of Peace

Are we heading into a new era of power politics, with conflicts looming on a continental scale compared with which the, yet short-lived, national conflicts of previous epochs would fade into insignificance? Or are we devising a new international structure in which the great world powers will, though taking on, over wide spheres, the responsibility for the maintenance of order and peace, not infringe on the basic rights of the smaller nations, nor provoke the opposition of other lions on the path? Have Moscow, Cairo and Teheran laid the foundation of a permanent cooperation of the four leading powers beyond the defeat of their common enemies? Will the association of the British Commonwealth of Nations be in a position to further

underwrite the heavy international obligations which its traditional position in the world had forced upon it? Is it altogether a realistic proposition that three or four powers could divide the world without the danger arising of new powerful counterblocks being formed? Could, in particular, Europe, though shaken today in its deepest foundations, but up to this war the centre of gravity of world politics, permanently resign to be sliced into two spheres of influence, or will this menace perhaps awake new revolutionary forces of unification? Is France ready to resign to a secondary role in Europe of which she was the master during the period between the two wars? What about Germany which, though defeated and completely disarmed, lying in the heart of that continent, may still weigh heavily in any future balance of power?

These are the questions with which the geopolitician is confronting the common man of the 20th century. They are deeply discomfiting to citizens who are still looking forward to seeing—almost automatically—emerge a new and better League of Nations after the defeat of the aggressor nations, an international organization in which all the nations, large and small, shall live together in freedom and welfare, under a system of collectively guaranteed security.

While the mere discussion of geopolitics is deeply unpopular with the peace-loving peoples of the democracies from time immemorial, international affairs have been ruled by stratagems of power. And our age may become the "century of the common man" only to the extent to which the common man will be able to grasp the real (and the faked) issues of power-politics, may be willing to carry a share of the responsibilities which, so far, have been the professional privilege of the diplomats. The demons of power will not be exercised by those trying to ignore them, but by the brave, who dare to look straight into their face.

Only one really effective answer of which the Moscow agreements held out the promise—can be given to them:

"The establishing at the earliest possible date of a general international organization, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states and open to membership by all such states, large and small". It must

be a tribunal to which every nation can submit its grievances and with the decisions of which even the greatest world-powers will comply. However far distant the goal may appear, upon this task all our political education must be centered.

Swedish Folk Schools

The People's Own Workshops for Democracy

By PER G. STENSLAND

ORIGINATING in the rank and file of the common people, the Swedish Folk Schools were created more than seventy years ago as instruments for popular education outside the regular public school system. To-day the Folk Schools of Sweden, like those of Denmark, Norway and Finland, are well-established institutions for modern adult education, workshops for Scandinavian democracy.

The decade of the 1860's saw the introduction of new laws for local self-government in Sweden and the reformation of the national parliament along modern representation lines as a two-chamber Riksdag. These developments brought into the open the question of intelligent and widespread participation in political life by those citizens who previously had had no opportunity, either nationally or locally, of making their voices heard in political decisions. Then as now, some form of adult education was indispensable for such participation.

Although the country had had a system of compulsory elementary education since 1842, it had become clear that this regular public school system was not enough. Adult citizens had to have a chance to acquire for themselves knowledge about their own social and political problems. It happened that about this time a Swedish liberal newspaperman named August Sohlman was studying

the Danish folk schools, which had grown out of the ideas of the great Bishop Grundtvig. Sohlman initiated discussion of "citizen schools" in a series of newspaper articles, published during the 1860's.

Some twenty years earlier, the first Danish folk schools had been organized by men like Kristen Kold and J. C. LaCour, followers of Grundtvig. These schools were born in a time of great political and economic crisis for Denmark when the country was threatened and later attacked by Germany, and when its economic position was seriously weakened. The answer to the threat to national life came from the Danish people themselves. On the basis of the political and cultural ideas of Grundtvig and his disciples, they created their folk schools. The Danes came to the schools, sang their own hymns, learned the Danish language, history, civics and literature to strengthen their souls, and studied agriculture and science to make rich their farms.

Sohlman had heard about these schools, and he knew of the plans of cultural leaders like Christopher Bruun and Bjornsterne Bjornson for creating similar schools in Norway. Sohlman's enthusiasm for the project was imparted to a group of young intellectuals and progressive farmers, and, in 1868, through their efforts, the first Swedish Folk Schools were founded. There were three of them: two in Skaane in Southern Sweden, Hvilanx and Oennestad, and one in

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