

## EASTERN BOUNDARIES OF EUROPE

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NOTHING more truthful can be said about the eastern boundaries of Europe than that they are untrue, and nothing is more permanent about them than their changefulness. In our day whole nations there have disappeared or been resurrected, whereas only minor changes have occurred in the West; and it is significant that the second world war was ignited in Poland, as the first one exploded out of Serbia.

Possibly the basic trouble is that political divisions have no geographical reality, but transgress natural boundaries as if they had never heard of climate and knew nothing about route-ways. Now, every state must possess a storehouse of material resource, and a focus of routes of exchange, in order to obtain a minimum of security and efficiency. Otherwise it cannot adequately organize and sustain a national existence, but must always remain frustrated or dependent. Moreover, each part of the state ought, if possible, to be accessible from its centre, and its frontiers ought to be indivisible. But in Eastern Europe, Finmark constricts Finland; Ladoga interrupts the boundary of Russia; Hango threatens Leningrad; Lithuania has been separated from its ancient centre at Vilna; Danzig is like a cork in the neck of the Polish bottle; Germany is cut off from East Prussia; Ruthenia has to make connections with the rest of Czechoslovakia by Hungary; Rumania includes the eastern market towns of the Hungarian plain; and Greece shuts out Bulgaria from the Mediterranean Sea. There is not a country that cannot argue hills, rivers and seas away in its own interests: and neither geographical unity nor proximity has joined neighbours together. They would rather suffer all sorts of natural disadvantages than be friends with each other.

What is even less understandable, however, is their disregard for racial affinity. Eastern Europe is more homogeneous than the West. As Dr. Morant has shown, whereas in the West ten or eleven different strands mingle in the blood indices of the people, in the East there are only three or four. Should we not conclude from this that the eastern people would be more united? Even where we multiplied the racial divisions, along with Prof. Coon, to include eight sub-types, ought we not to find

a comparative unity, an underlying association? Yet the fact is that fifteen separate political entities have superimposed themselves on these eight racial subtypes or three major races: entities which are so ignorant of heredity as to persecute and plunder their next of kin, while they make friends with those who have murdered their progenitors. Finland stretches east of its racial frontier; Estonia and Latvia, though of one blood, are divided; East Prussia has more than the Prussian share of the Baltic; Rumania and Poland include more of the Carpathians than their people have colonized; Bulgaria is a racial anachronism—long ago its time was up; Czechoslovakia is like a Jacob's coat of many colours, and like it destined to be drenched in blood; while Greece and Serbia carve up the Macedonians as if they had no name. Not a single state in Eastern Europe, with the sole exception of Sweden, bears out a true relationship between nationality and race.

Yet race is, perhaps, an antedeluvian affair, long ago buried under the strata of culture and creed, and one might forgive the Europeans their disregard for kinship, if they would respect the bonds of language or religion. After all, language gives us a better basis for understanding than blood. By reason of a foreign language, Mediterranean man in Norway is a complete stranger to Mediterranean man in Greece; but he is very intimate with the Nordic man of Sweden, because he understands the Swedish tongue. A unity of language may well overcome racial differences, while it greatly facilitates the development of political alliance. Nevertheless, Eastern European boundaries ignore its significance: and where language unites, politics can put asunder. Even Versailles could not prevent the division of linguistic groups for economic and strategic reasons. The Ukrainian group was dismembered to secure the protection of Lwow for Poland, and might it not be said that the White Russians were sacrificed for a railway line? About three million Hungarians were cut off from their Motherland to complete its encirclement by the Little Entente; three million Germans were included in Czechoslovakia to preserve the defence of the mountains.

One might suppose that what language could not do, religion would effect. The vast majority of the people in Eastern Europe are Christians. Only a small number in the Balkans differ from them, and are Mohammedans. A common religion is the single common factor of European culture: yet its cementing powers have held together not even its own communicants. Rival loyalties have swayed the masses of the East, and forgetting

their struggle with atheism and paganism, Christians fight, despoil and destroy each other with incongruous zest. Although Prussia is Protestant, it has in the past allied itself with Catholic Poland to fight against Protestant Sweden; Hungary and Bohemia fell before the Turk quarrelling with each other, although they were Catholic; while Russia and Rumania were no more friendly when they worshipped in the Orthodox Church than they are now when their armies clash upon the plains of war.

Obviously then, the boundaries of Eastern Europe, if they have any explanation at all, cannot be attributed to cultural distinctions. From what, then, can they have sprung? The answer is, from economic and strategic necessities. For what other reasons did the Versailles boundaries constantly favour the economic development and strategic security of the new eastern states? Czechoslovakia was given the northern rim of the Hungarian plain to supply mountainous Slovakia with winter fodder and extra wheat. It obtained a sector of the Hungarian Danube in order to have a river outlet to world commerce. It secured the German Sudetenland so as to preserve its timber, coal, iron and waterpower resources. And, finally, it partitioned Ruthenia, to have mountain defences and to complete the encirclement of Hungary by contact with Rumania. If these were not the ends, at any rate they were the results of post-war policies.

Unfortunately, however, economic and strategic problems bear different interpretations. Victorious countries are nearly always favoured in the final settlement, and serious injustices are imposed on the subject states. In other words, economic frontiers are as untrue as religious, linguistic or racial ones. And thus the frontiers that gave Czechoslovakia and Rumania a great measure of self-sufficiency and security served only to cripple Hungary.

Now the commercial significance of Hungary has long been great because of its central position on the Danube. It is the guardian of the gateways of the Alps, Carpathian and Balkan mountains. It is the natural focus of routeways for the Danube Basin. But its boundaries were so reduced that its peripheral railways passed into the hands of its neighbours, while its radial lines of communication were cut off from their termini. A ring of Hungarian market towns and villages thus went to the enemy, and agriculture in outer Hungary was disorganised. An even greater handicap was suffered in the loss of large portions of cultivable plain and of uplands rich in resources. Between 1913 and 1925 wheat production fell by 14%, sugar beet by 30%

and tobacco by 48%. Iron production decreased by 87%, and upland resources of timber and water power were completely lost. Foreign trade was deranged, and over 30% of it was captured by the neighbouring countries. It is therefore quite understandable that Hungary could not regard the Versailles boundaries as satisfactory on any grounds whatever.

In the same way the German-Polish boundary was drawn chiefly to enlarge and preserve Polish economic interests. Two crucial areas were in particular dispute, namely, the Silesian coalfield which gave Poland a basis for industrial development, and the Polish Corridor which gave the country an outlet to the sea. In 1921, under the League of Nations, a plebiscite in Silesia voted by a 7-4 majority for union with Germany, but despite this fact Silesia was divided, and the Poles were given 79% of its coal mines, 70% of its lead and zinc mines, and over 50% of its blast furnaces and steel mills. Meanwhile in the North the Polish Corridor was drawn to give Poland access to the sea; but it created as much friction as it was meant to solve, and made travel and transport extremely inconvenient and costly between Germany and East Prussia.

Undoubtedly Germany suffered from these changes: but it suffered even more from the subsequent limitations which they imposed on its eastern trade. Germany has long regarded Eastern Europe as its trading sphere. No other country has as many contacts with the East. Its ports dominate the Baltic. Its railways and roads radiate throughout the Great North Plain, the Danube and the Balkans. There is, besides, an exceptionally favourable basis for trade. The East produces up to a 25% excess of grain and raw materials, and in turn offers itself as a market for manufactured goods. But the newly formed states of Czechoslovakia and Poland soon began to compete in the Germano-Austrian spheres; while tariff barriers protecting the national economies of the New States made German penetration all the more difficult. Notwithstanding, Germany still required to import large amounts from the East, and therefore an adverse balance of trade developed, which was very hard to bear.

These economic and strategic problems resolve themselves into two sets of conflicting claims. On the one hand, the eastern border states want to extend their frontiers outward away from their centres to capture hinterlands of trade, to secure industrial raw materials, to find outlets to the sea, and to gain space as a defence against encirclement. On the other hand, the Great

Powers want to extend their frontiers inward into the eastern borderlands to control the river ways and sea lanes to their markets, to find space for colonization and the further development of agriculture, to gain industrial resources and strategic "divides." Thus two tremendous and opposite forces are at work: the first of which is a centrifugal movement out from the borderland; the second, a centripetal movement into its very centre. The two have always contended against each other, and it is extremely difficult to meet their claims with equal justice or generosity.

The beginning of the conflict goes back to prehistory. Europe at that time was nothing more than an adjunct of Asia, and western civilisation rested on an eastern foundation. The eastern borderland was the seed-bed of European culture, and the feeding ground of European population. It was the very heart of the continent. In it there arose three centres of diffusion—the Aegean, the Danube and the Russian Steppe—which were separated from each other by well marked geographical partitions, and, being cut off to their rear by mountain and desert, were open chiefly to the West. Geography both pushed and pulled toward the West. For the whole of Europe is but an escape of land rushing out into a series of peninsulas and islands from the inclement snows and inhospitable deserts of the East to the temperate warmth and perennial waters of the Atlantic shores. The polar plains and barren lands of the North East pushed Nordic and Ladogan man, Lapp and Finn, Viking and Russian increasingly to the South West; the arid wastes and stony plateaux of the South East thrust Alpine and Mediterranean man, Achaean and Dorian, Gael and Celt, Greek and Latin, Jew and Arab, Hun, Goth, Avar, Bulgar and Magyar in long succession—thrust them out to the North West: but whether North or South, the pilgrim fathers, pirates, adventurers and pioneers of Europe moved steadily to the West. "Go West, young man", was probably said by every Horace Greeley of the cities, villages and camps of Europe a thousand to three thousand years ago.

The most significant of all these changeful movements were the barbarian invasions of the Dark Ages and the political expansion of Hungary and Poland in the Middle Ages. The first led to the Fall of Rome and the retarding of civilization in the West; the second to the halt of the Turks and the maintenance of civilization in the East. And it is this latter movement that is of particular interest to the eastern borderland.

Historically, Poland and Hungary owe their early fortunes to the encirclement of the western powers by the Saxons, Avars and Saracens, and to the fatal policy adopted by the Holy Roman Empire of attempting to unite Northern with Southern Europe. The eastern powers were similarly engaged in throwing off encircling invaders, and in uniting unwieldy and divided territories. Byzantium was struggling against Bulgars and Turks: the Russians were contending on two fronts with the Karelians and the Khazaks. Such a simultaneous immobilization of the great western and eastern powers allowed the rapid and unprecedented expansion of the borderland states: and when the Byzantine Empire finally decayed to a rump, the centrifugal movement developed to its height. Poland and its ally, Lithuania bestrode the continent from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and Hungary straddled the Balkans from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. In doing so, both countries made exceptionally good use of their transcontinental route-ways. Poland was situated at one of the shortest crossings of Central Europe from North to South, as well as on the convergent routes of the Great North Plain. Hungary was at the centre of the chief river system in Europe.

As long as the powers at the separate termini of these routes were weak, the focal position of the two border states was of the greatest advantage: but as soon as the surrounding nations commenced to expand, the same focal position attracted colonists and conquerors from every side, and proved a fatal disadvantage. Thus when the Germans moved east and the Russians west, their lines of advance cut the radiating spokes of Polish power, and the collapse of the border states was ensured.

It is as well to remember that modern Germany rose as a protest against Poland, for it developed from the buffer principality of Brandenburg to defend the northern approaches of the Empire against Poles, Czechs and Pomeranians. Brandenburg was situated in the transcontinental glacial depressions of the North European plain, and consequently found a very easy line of advance along tributary waters from Elbe to Oder, Oder to Vistula, and Vistula to Niemen. But the Brandenburg-East Prussian state could not long remain satisfied with this narrow belt of country, because it was nothing more than an extension of heath, moor, marsh and forest. "The country's need was a larger and more affluent population, and this could come only by works of development", or by territorial expansion. Now, while the Germans held the middle sectors of the North European

rivers, the deltas were occupied by Pomeranians, Swedes, Poles and Lithuanians, and the headwaters were in the control of the Czechs and Poles. In other words, Prussia was sandwiched between two lines of potentially hostile powers. Such an encirclement imperilled the very foundations of the state, and obstructed its growth. So at length it adopted a policy of occupying the strategic foci of European routes. For as Frederick the Great said, "He who holds the mouth of the Vistula has greater power than the King in Warsaw". To be master of the river was to be master of Europe. And where it had already gained a stranglehold on the Rhine at the Duchy of Cleves, Prussia increased its pressure by occupying crossways on the Lippe and Weser; then the Saale and Ruhr; thereafter the Ems, Oder and Warthe; and at length the Vistula. No more brilliant strategy than this was ever conceived, and it evolved as a natural outcome the threefold policy of dominating the North and Baltic seas at the river mouths, of owning the northern wheat belt of Europe in the upper reaches of the rivers, and of obtaining the great coalfields through which the rivers flowed: a basis for the threefold development of commerce, agriculture and industry.

These aims were partially secured by the beginning of the nineteenth century, but they could be completed only by the occupation of Polish Silesia for industry, the Polish Corridor for trade, the Bohemian massif for security and the Ukranian plains for agricultural produce. Indeed the whole logic of German geopolitics requires the mastery of Eastern Europe, and particularly the control of Austria and Bohemia and the exploitation of Poland and the Ukraine.

Germany, however, is not the only great power compelled by geography, economics and strategy to move into the eastern borderlands. Like Germany, Russia was constricted by an initial envelopment that threatened the very beginnings of the state. Like Germany, it has developed by breaking through the ring, and swallowing up its encirclers. It began as a small principality on the Moscow river. North of it were the fierce forest tribes of the Karelian Finns. South of it were the mobile, pastoral tribes of the Bulgars, Magyars, Khazaks and later, Tartars. But its control of the great European "divide" between the Baltic and Black Seas was of such advantage to Russia that it was able to dominate transcontinental trade, and to threaten the hinterlands of the surrounding coastal states. Accordingly, by a slow process of peasant colonization, commercial penetration and regional organization along its radiating routeways, Moscow

became for Eastern Europe what Berlin was for Central Europe, the focus of different economies and traditions. But, as to Germany, the original patrimony was insufficient. The radiating routeways were crossed by hostile boundaries. The best soils of the Russian plain, especially the black earths of the Ukraine, were outside of its possession. That is to say, it lacked adequate communication and a satisfactory storehouse. As a consequence, an outward push for the sea coasts and the cultivable plains began: and with the famous words of Peter the Great, "It is water I want, not land", there commenced the drive to the West which involved the whole orderland.

Even when access to the Gulf of Finland and to the Crimea was gained, Russia was not satisfied. It felt that Sweden and Finland were still a threat to its Baltic approaches, while Bessarabia and the Bosphorus were a constant danger on its southern flank. No country was more in peril of blockade, and though it developed an increasingly more efficient system of communication, though it secured rich agricultural lands and possessed great industrial resources, it could not afford to be shut out from the raw materials and the markets of the world. The completion of its aims, therefore, required a further expansion into the West, and the occupation of Lithuania, Poland and Ruthenia.

The eastward drive of Germany and the westward drive of Russia represent the great centripetal forces disturbing the equilibrium of the eastern boundaries. Yet they were not the original causes of disruption. For simultaneously with them, as Mr. Mead has shown, there was a drive of Sweden to the South and of Turkey to the North. And it was the Ottoman attack on Hungary and the Swedish and Ottoman assault on Poland that began the fracture of the borderland. The border states could not meet these increasingly convergent thrusts; at length the centripetal overcame the centrifugal forces; and the Middle Eastern countries were occluded. The fronts of the Great Powers met.

There then began—with what might be a better use of Mr. Churchill's famous phrase—the battle of the Bulges, and the final partitioning of Poland. The German boundaries bulged eastward from Silesia and West Prussia toward Ruthenia and Lithuania, in an opening V. The Russian boundaries bulged westward from White Russia and the Ukraine toward Warsaw in a closing V. The two V's interlocked, and strained against each other. For a remarkably long time the frontier was quies-



cent, but when Germany had halted from its African and Oceanic enterprises, and Russia had fixed its lines against the Japanese, mutual friction arose. It burst into flame in the last war: and the whole of the peace thereafter and the present war have only proved to be further episodes in the titanic struggle. For what is the present war but an attempt—clearly defined in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—to complete the German achievement of owning the coal fields, wheat belts, riverways and sea lanes of Europe: or viewed from the Russian standpoint, what is it but the attempt to obtain for a continental power all the privileges and powers of maritime Europe?

The eastern boundaries of Europe, then, are an essay to solve two series of claims. First there are the claims to self-determination and self-sufficiency of the borderland states themselves; and these require a broad zone of independent development between Germany and Russia. Versailles held to these principles. Secondly there are the claims to spheres of influence and strategic freedom by the Great Powers, and these require the division of the East into a German region and a Russian one.

The conclusion for a western democracy is to favour the former kind of settlement: but before we do so, we ought to consider every aspect of the problem. There is no easy solution. If we favour the borderland states, we threaten the economic and strategic interests of their neighbours; if we support the Great Powers, we subject large minorities to economic dependence and possibly to cultural oppression. For instance, for Finland to hold Hango and the Karelian isthmus is a strategic threat to the western exits and approaches of Russia: and Russia insists on having free, secure and all-the-year- access to the Atlantic. But this in its turn can be obtained only by occupying lands long settled by the Finns and by separating Vipuri junction from the many routeways it is supposed to join. Finnish independence and Russian freedom are geographically opposed to each other. What, therefore, is an adequate solution?

Or again, for Poland to hold the Corridor and Silisia is to interrupt the contacts of the two Prussias and to disintegrate the economy of the Oder basin. Germany needs the Corridor to preserve the unity of its Baltic possessions; but on the other hand Poland ought to have an outlet to the sea. The economic independence of Poland, the freedom of Prussia—these are geographically opposed to each other. Then, what is the solution?

It is impossible for the solution to come, as it was sought after

the First World War, by a new nationalism. Perfervid nationalism is only an additional and a worse form of segregation to divide men and women from each other; it is a new language, more fertile in misunderstanding than any foreign tongue; it is a new religion, more intolerant than any militant dogma; it is a new racial perversion, more degrading than any amount of in-breeding. It shuts men out from humanity, and is nothing more than a retreat to tribal totemism. It interrupts international trade, prevents the adjustment of supply to demand, raises the cost of living and narrows economic opportunities, without providing commensurate returns. Its present gains can only become a loss to posterity; for national self-assertion is international suicide.

It is equally impossible to look for the solution in any kind of new imperialism, whether of the masses or of their leaders. No one pattern of life can satisfy Europe. It is above all others a continent of diverse experiences, of multiple loyalties and manifold faiths. It is a continent which, while it seeks unity, abhors uniformity; while it requires discipline, will not brook regimentation; while it asks for peace, will not accept petrification. For local patriotism has a place; regional developments greatly enrich the total personality of a continent, and the whole history of Europe vindicates the value of nonconformity. We cannot go back to a balance of powers, or a grouping of nations short of a world grouping.

The only adequate solution, therefore, would appear to be in a co-operative international organization where boundaries will not need to provide for strategy because every state will be disarmed; or to protect resources, because every state will have the freest access to raw materials, and what is more, to the markets of the world; where they will not need to segregate cultural traditions, because every state will acknowledge the autonomy of the cultural group; or to perpetuate racial divisions, because every state will free itself from racial prejudice.

The solution, in short, is to draw the boundaries of Europe so that instead of dividing people they may do all that is possible to bring them together; instead of being frontiers of conflict, they may become frontiers of contact.