

**THE REGIONS OF
GERMANY**

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THE REGIONS OF GERMANY

by

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INTRODUCTORY

A recent leading article in *The Times*¹ emphasizes that the rebuilding of Europe must be effected not by a patching up of existing frontiers but by building anew on the basis of the "practical necessities of modern life". A letter in *The Times* (March 3, 1944) from Mr. A. L. Rowse carries this point of view further with special reference to Germany. He urges that the new federal states into which Germany will presumably be divided should be based on the "natural provincial groupings", which he describes as "substantial entities with their own local traditions", which already exist with "their roots in the country".

Both this leading article and Mr. Rowse, reflecting, we believe, the general viewpoint, emphasize the historical aspect of the problem,² but its geographical character is even more fundamental. The structure of such "groupings" or regions has been the particular concern of geographers in recent years in Germany, Britain, France and the United States, and they have a substantial contribution to make to the elaboration of principles in defining the frontiers of the European States and the divisions inside them. Modern geography regards such a natural grouping, not as a mere physical unit, but as a socio-economic unit with common economic, cultural and historical associations. The principles and technique of such geographical investigation are well established, but require fuller recognition in this country.

The problem of creating a federal Germany on the basis of regional needs is one to which German scholars and statesmen have given much attention, for the revolution in the economic and social structure of Germany in the last two generations has brought into being new entities of human space relationships that have outmoded the old historical units and their numerous detached territories. In the early years of the Weimar Republic, official schemes were put forward for the creation of new States, about twelve in number, on federal principles, though they failed through the opposition of the Prussian government. These suggested divisions adhered closely to the existing political units

¹ "Policies for Europe", February 29, 1944.

² See also an article by Lord Vansittart on "The Real Way to Permanent Peace," in the *Sunday Express*, December 19, 1943.

and, as is now generally recognized by students of the problem in Germany, did not pay sufficient attention to the geographical realities of modern life. Since then a vast body of research has been undertaken, by official and semi-official bodies and by private persons, especially by geographers, on the economic, social and cultural associations, and their integration into natural provincial units. Exhaustive studies were undertaken during the Weimar régime. More recently the Nazis have encouraged such research. They have also abolished many territorial anomalies and created major units for purposes of national planning and Party organization. The Reich departments and many other nation-wide concerns also have such divisions, independent of the *Länder* and the Prussian Provinces. All these units ignore the numerous small territories that are anachronisms in the modern world.

Eleven major natural provinces, with two smaller city units, are now recognized. Several of these correspond with existing political units but only broadly. There are, however, considerable divergences from these, and, in fact, several provinces cut right across the political boundaries. Thus, for example, *Mitteldeutschland* includes the *Länder* of Saxony, Thuringia, Anhalt, part of Brunswick and the Prussian Province of Saxony south of Magdeburg. *Niedersachsen* has its nucleus in the Province of Hanover. Rhine-Main is centred on Frankfurt. Rhineland-Westphalia has its nucleus in these two provinces, but with modified boundaries. The Hansa Cities of Hamburg and Bremen, together with contiguous areas linked with them, are generally considered as separate entities. These natural provinces exist in the corporate life of Germany, and their adoption as new political units has been advocated for many years.

The aim of this short book is to portray in a series of essays the salient features of these "natural" provinces of Germany as opposed to political provinces, emphasizing the fundamental associations upon which their unity is based. The broader general conditions affecting the country as a whole have been dealt with in my Penguin Special, *The German Lebensraum*, to which the reader is referred, and only the broader and specially relevant aspects are treated here. More detailed discussion of the concept of regionalism, with specific reference to the United States, Britain, France and Germany, will be found in my forthcoming book in this series on *City, Region and Regionalism*.

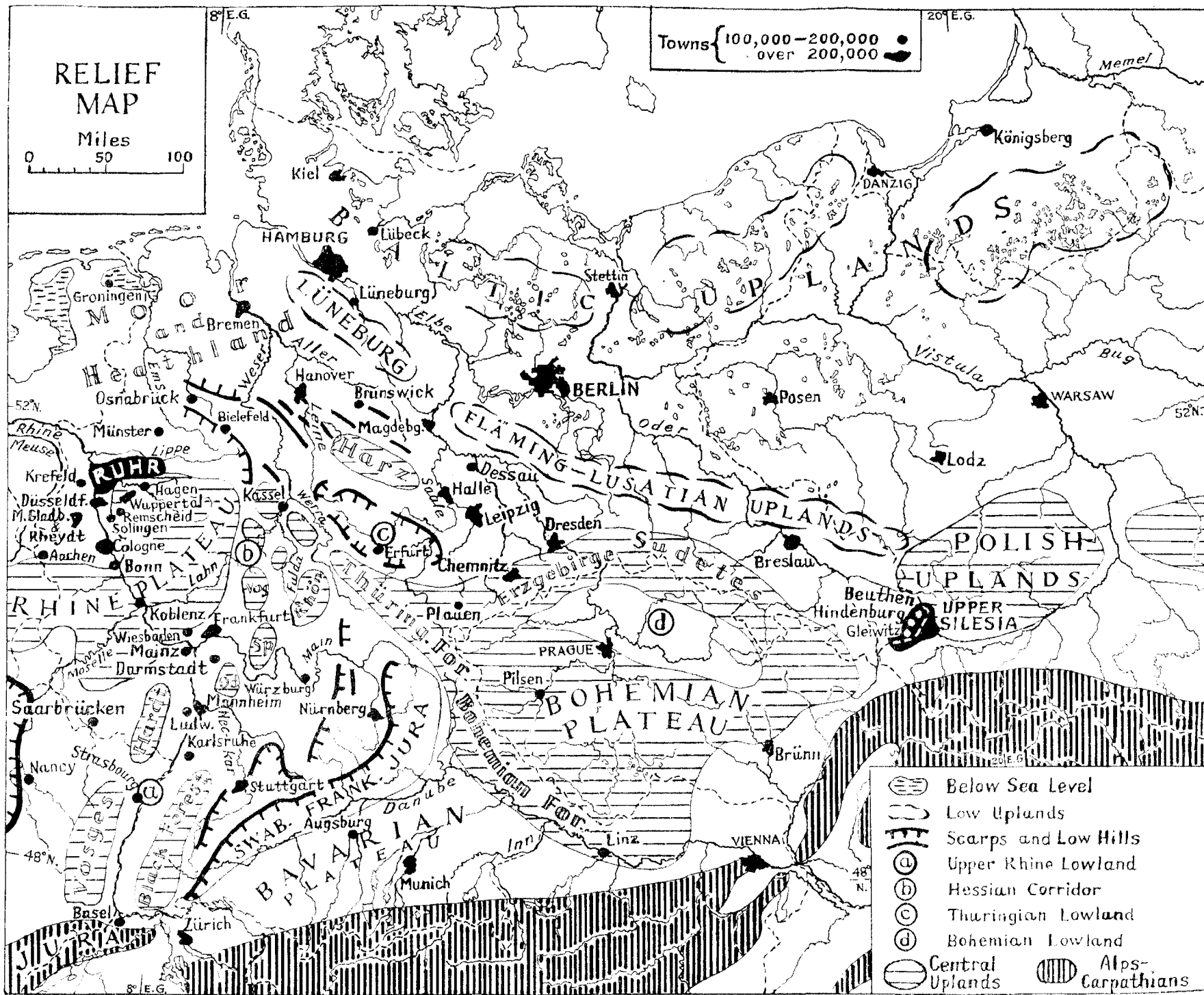
The maps have been chosen to cover, in the main, Germany

as a whole, and in reading the chapters on the separate regions, reference can be made to these. Several detailed regional maps have been added to illustrate specific points.

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I am deeply indebted to Mr. J. N. L. Baker, Reader in Historical Geography, University of Oxford, for correcting the proofs. Unfortunately, it has not been practicable to adopt all his suggestions, and certain defects of style and exposition, due to rapid writing when one's time is more than fully occupied with official matters, have had to stand in order to ensure speedy publication.

ROBERT E. DICKINSON.



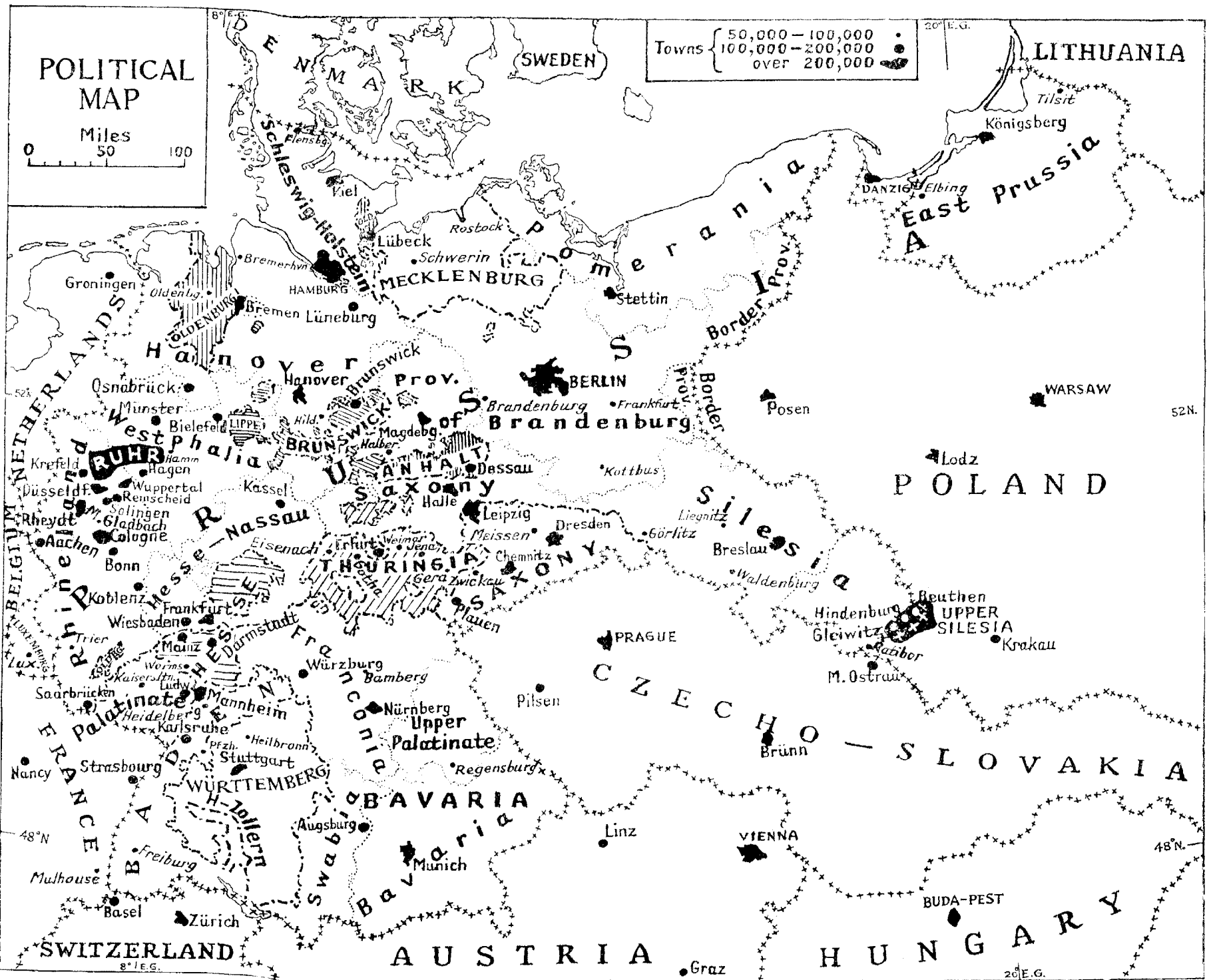


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