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THE MILITARY
IMPORTANCE
OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA
IN EUROPE

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IN EUROPE

by

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With 8 Maps

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"If success be achieved in uniting Austria with Germany, the collapse of Czechoslovakia will follow; Germany will then have common frontiers with Italy and Yugoslavia, and Italy will be strengthened against France."

Ewald Banse in "Raum und Volk im Weltkrieg", Edition of 1932.

I

BRIEF HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

The Rise of the Czechoslovak State

After the defeat of the Central Powers at the end of October 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Empire fell asunder. The nations that had composed it either joined their kinsmen among the victorious Allied countries—Italy, Rumania and Yugoslavia—or formed new States. In this latter manner arose Czechoslovakia and Poland. Finally, there remained the racial remnants of the old Monarchy—Austria with a German population, and Hungary with a Magyar population. The territories of the new Austria and Hungary formed a central nationality zone in Central Europe touching the Italians on the West and the Rumanians on the East. North of this German-Magyar zone were the Slavonic nations forming the Republics of Czechoslovakia and Poland. The South Slavs of the Danubian Monarchy joined up to the new Yugoslavia.

Old Austria-Hungary had a population of 54,000,000 and of this number the two dominating nations, the Germans and the Hungarians (Magyars) accounted for 10,000,000 each. Of these, the Czechoslovak Republic absorbed 3,000,000 Germans and 750,000 Magyars while about 1,000,000 Czechoslovaks were left in Austria and Hungary. The Germans in Czechoslovakia are found mainly in the *North and West* frontier districts. From time immemorial they have been citizens of the Czech State, the Kingdom of Bohemia, constituting with the Czechs an economic entity. This fact, as we shall see later, was greatly influenced by geographical conditions.

The Czechoslovak State has an area of 140,000 sq. kilometres (54,200 sq. miles), and is thus approximately the size of Great Britain and Ireland. It has a population of upwards of 16,000,000, or about one-third of that of the British Isles. Czechoslovaks and Ruthenians account for 12,000,000 of the total.

The Czechoslovak State arose through a restoration of their ancient independence to the lands of the Bohemian Crown—Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia—and the incorporation of the Slovak territory of the Northern portion of former Hungary. The lands of the Bohemian Crown had an area of 80,000 sq. kilometres and a population of 12,000,000; the Slovak regions of Northern Hungary an area of 60,000 sq. kilometres, and a population of 4,000,000.

On the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy the Czechoslovak Republic took over about a quarter of the population, one-fifth of the territory, five-sixths of the industries, and one-half of the mineral wealth of

the old Empire. The Western portion of the Czechoslovak Republic runs wedge-like deep into the German Reich. On this territory, the most remote from possible theatres of war and inhabited by the most progressive sector of the population, there grew up in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire the main portion of the Austrian heavy industry—in particular, the Škoda Works which are the third largest armament works in Europe, ranking next after the Krupp concern in Germany and the Schneider-Creusot works in France.

In area Czechoslovakia is one-fourth the size of France, and has nearly two-fifths the population of that country. As regards output of strategic importance the comparative figures for France, Italy and Czechoslovakia in 1929 were as follows (in tons, 000's omitted):

	<i>Pit-coal</i>	<i>Lignite</i>	<i>Pig-iron</i>	<i>Steel</i>
France	54,000	1,000	10,100	9,400
Italy		1,000	500	1,800
Czechoslovakia	16,800	22,500	1,600	2,100

In 1929 Czechoslovakia thus turned out 20% more steel and 30% more iron than Italy. Even to-day Czechoslovakia ranks third in Central Europe—after Germany and Italy—in industrial capacity. Her capacity is considerably in excess of that of Poland. The tremendous material and productive potentiality of Czechoslovakia represents a strong basis for her defence. At the same time, however, it makes her the object of foreign strategic designs, as a possible prey or as an enemy.

The Struggle for the Danubian Basin.

The severance of the Slavs of the North from those of the South was accomplished in Central Europe by the thrust of belligerent nations from the East and from the West. These thrusts were most successful in regions where advance was easy, where the natural obstacles were fewest. The most favourable direction for a military entry to Central Europe was always that of the river Danube whether the invasion was from the East or from the West. The severance of the Northern from the Southern Slavs was the work of two nations who advanced against one another along the Danube—the Germans (from the West) and the Mongols (from the East). The Germans came from the Rhine valley, from the area between that river and the Weser, the Mongols (Magyars) came from the steppes of Southern Russia. No region in all Europe was so soaked in blood as that which stretches along the two banks of the middle Danube. That region saw the greatest succession of nation after nation, of the most extensive movements, and also of the greatest changes of frontiers.

To the ancient Danubian line of communication several connections led from the East as also from the West. We have seen that this was the direction taken by the Germanic peoples in their advance from the Rhine. This was the Northern route to the Danubian basin from the West, from the Germanic forests *north* of the Alps. Into the valley of the Danube there led a second route from the West *south of the Alps*, from the Apennine Peninsula. This was used by the Ro-

mans in ancient times. From the East led one route along which came, among other nomadic tribes, the Magyars at that time from the South Russian steppes. This was the northern approach to the Danubian basin from the East, but there was also a southern route from Asia Minor via the Balkan Peninsula. This was the route used by the Turks at the opening of the modern era.

Just as the northern and southern routes from the West to the Danubian basin were separated from each other by the Alps, so were the northern and southern routes from the East to that basin divided by the Black Sea.

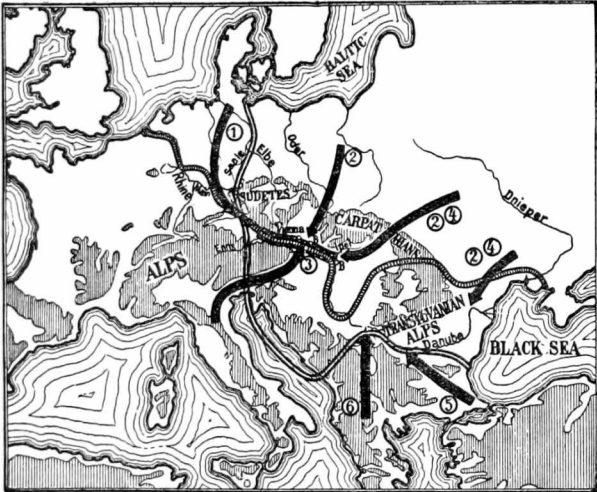
The valley of the Danube was an outstanding trade and military route between the East and the West of Europe, because the Danube had a really favourable direction and also because there were in general few routes between the European West and East, the mountains and foothills covered with primeval forest which stretched across it in a great arch from the Alps to the East making Central Europe very impassable. The one tip of this mountain crescent touched the Mediterranean between the Gulfs of Genoa and Lyons, its summit was formed by the Sudete Range, while the other, the Eastern horn of the crescent, was formed by the Carpathians which touched the Black Sea. This mountain rampart separated the Apennine and Balkan peninsulas from the rest of Europe, and enfolded the basins of Bohemia and Hungary together with their connecting link, the Gateway of Moravia. Protected against the North by this mountain rampart, the territories lying within the Central European crescent

formed a clear geographical entity in which the most fertile areas were located around the Danube and its tributaries, and along the Po South of the Alps on its course to the Adriatic.

The Crossroads of Central-European Thrusts.

The movement of the nations tended, from times immemorial, rather from East to West, from Asia to the Russian steppes, and thence to Central Europe, and here predominantly to the Danubian basin and its fertile regions. As we have already said, there led to the southern portion of Central Europe protected by the mountain arch of the Alps and Carpathians a route also from Asia Minor via the Balkans, a route used by the Turks, while a route leading from Africa via the Pyrenees Peninsula was availed of by Hannibal. These were subsidiary routes. In addition to that there was pressure from the North, from Scandinavia via the peninsula of Jutland.

At the commencement of our era, Central Europe north of the arch formed by the Alps, the Sudetes and the Carpathians was inhabited in its western parts by the Germanic and in the East by the Slavonic tribes (see Map 1). Facing the Germans on the South were the Romans in the Apennine Peninsula, while in the Balkan Peninsula the Slavs were face to face with the Greeks. By the advance of the Romans and Greeks from the South and the advance of the German and Slavonic tribes from the North, the northern and southern thrusts came into collision along the line of the



- Frontier of the Roman Empire at the epoch of its greatest extent towards the North
- ===== Frontier of the Slavonic tribes to the South and West in the fifth century
- ① Direction of the Germanic advance from the North
- ② » » » Slavonic advance from the North-east
- ③ » » » Roman advance from the South
- ④ » » » Mongolian advance from the East
- ⑤ » » » Greek advance from the South
- ⑥ » » » Turkish advance from the South-east

Rhine, the Main and the Danube. All that was to the West and South of that line represented the Roman Empire, and all that was to the North represented a medley of Germanic tribes to the West and one of Slavonic tribes on the East. While the Germanic

peoples exerted their thrust upon the crumbling Roman Empire across the Rhine, the Slavs penetrated to that Empire over the Danube, to the Alpine lands on the one hand and to the Balkans and to the Adriatic on the other. The Romans and Greeks used the southern routes to Central Europe, while the Germans and Slavs took the northern routes thither.

Into the Danubian basin direct from the North the only convenient route is by the Gateway of Moravia, a route which from time immemorial linked up the Baltic Sea with the Adriatic and was known as the "Amber Route".

From the North-west approach is secured along the Danube itself, and from the North-east via the Użok Pass. The most important was the route by way of the Użok Pass, for it led along the watershed between the Baltic and Black Seas through a plain that was on the whole passable and linked up with the steppes of Russia. The route from the East via Użok Pass had great military importance. It was taken advantage of largely by the peoples of the steppes who travelled on horseback, for in advancing from the Dnieper to the Danube there was no considerable river to be crossed. Along this route many invasions were made to Central Europe from the East. It was used by the Huns, the Avars, the Magyars and the Tartars - Mongolians who either set on one another or went forth to plunder in the fertile basin of the Danube, in the Balkans and in Italy.

Whatever direction we take—from the Apennine Peninsula, from the Balkans, from the Rhineland, from the Elbe Valley or from the middle reaches of the Dnie-

per—all these trade and military routes meet on the upper Danube between its confluence with the Enns on the West and the Ipel on the East, a stretch of some 500 kilometres. The middle portion of the Danube between the Enns and the Ipel thus represents the main military crossroads in Central Europe. Whoever held the middle reach of the Danube dominated as a rule the whole of Central Europe, for it held the key to all the military routes. This applied equally to ancient times as to the Middle Ages, and it holds good to this day. It was not to no purpose that important towns as centres of communications arose in this sector of the Danube—Vienna, Budapest and many others. Vienna is a junction not only for communications from the West to the East of Europe but also from North to South. To-day the Orient Express runs precisely along the old Rhine-Danube line of communication. Through Vienna runs the old “Amber Route” from the Baltic to the Adriatic. Through it, too, runs the railway, which from Bohumín to Přerov and Brno passes through Czechoslovak territory, and is the most frequented railway line in Czechoslovakia.

Balance of Power on the Middle Danube.

It is natural that a State established at such an important military and trade point of intersection should always have been exposed to tremendous pressures. In order to withstand such pressures from without it had to be provided with adequately military stability

and political strength. Only a great State could maintain its position here; the smaller ones had to be mere buffer States, continually passing from hand to hand according to which pressure got the upper hand for the moment.

A State located on the Danubian crossroads was therefore compelled to choose frontiers which served their purpose for military defence, that is, frontiers *based on natural obstacles*. One such frontier against the East was *the Danube from the Ipel to the South, and the southern foothills of the Carpathians on the North*.

Another eastern frontier area on the Middle Danube, but one less thrust forward, was one formed by the foothills of the Alps and the Little Carpathians the connecting link of which runs past present-day Bratislava. Against the West the natural frontier was on the Enns which on the North touches the Bohemian Forest (Šumava) and on the South links up with the Alps. In order to maintain the central position at Bratislava and at the bend of the Danube near the junction of the Ipel it was thus essential *to block also the routes that approach these two positions* from the flank. In case of pressure from the East the positions on the Ipel and at Bratislava were exposed to flank attack from the North via the Gateway of Moravia and the valley of the Váh. Against the West the position on the Enns was in its turn threatened from the North along the valley of the Elbe and the Vltava. If any State was to maintain its position on the middle Danube it was thus essential *to block all approaches from the North to the mountain crescent* protecting the Da-

nubian basis, that is the approaches over the Sudetes and Carpathians.

If therefore a State was to be created on the middle Danube capable of resisting the pressures from these four sides it had of necessity to include the basin of Bohemia, the valley of the Morava, the Hungarian basin, the eastern Alps and the northern Balkans. This would have been a great expanse. A smaller expanse for such a State would have been possible by foregoing some area in the East, by surrendering the Great Plain of Hungary East of the Danube. According to the present distribution of Europe it would have been necessary for the avoidance of conflicts, irritations and pressures in Central Europe to form a federation of the present-day areas of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Rumania and Yugoslavia. In the worst case the territories of Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary would have sufficed.

Czechoslovakia by virtue of her very form answers to the ancient strategic demands for the defence of the Danubian basin. It is an interesting fact that she represents the central link of a zone of States established on the watershed of Central Europe. Czechoslovakia covers the approaches to the Danubian basin from the North. Austria covers them from the West, and Rumania from the East. Rumania also covers the approach to the Balkan Peninsula in the same manner as Switzerland and Austria cover the approach to the Apennine Peninsula.

Switzerland-Austria-Czechoslovakia-Rumania—these are the northern marginal areas of the southern portion of Central Europe, protected by the Alps, the Su-

detes and the Carpathians. They extend across the "roof" of Central Europe, on the watershed between the northern and southern seas, between the North and the Baltic Seas on the one hand, and the Mediterranean and the Black Sea on the other.

How was it that in the process of time these four States facing the North and located on the mountain arch stretching over the southern portion of Central Europe came into being?

Romans, Germans, Slavs and Mongols

The earliest history can give us only a picture of the development of the thrusts in Central Europe from the South to the North, that is, of the advance of the Romans and Greeks into the Danubian basin. In the first thousand years of our era the Romans were for five hundred years the lords of the shores of the British Isles, along the Rhine, down to the mouth of the Danube. During the second five hundred years the dominion over the crossroads of the upper Danube continually changed hands.

The Romans were forced out of the Danubian basin because they were unable adequately to cover the approaches to it from the North and the East. They contented themselves with holding the river itself. Marcus Aurelius in the second century, it is true, for a brief period occupied the Gateway of Moravia and a portion of Slovakia, but in reality for ensuring the Roman dominion over the Danube it was essential to have occupied also the Bohemian basin (then known as

the Hercynian Forest) and the whole of Western Slovakia.

The struggle for the middle Danube between the North (the Germanic tribes) and the South (the Roman) was decided from the East by Attila, the Hun leader. At the end of the fifth century he dominated the Danubian area and from it penetrated to Italy, and via Southern Germany to the North of France. Into the territories laid waste by the Huns came the Slavs from the North, from the regions of present-day Poland, and at the close of the sixth century they had occupied a western front represented by the line of the Elbe—the Saale-Ratisbon—the Enns—the East-Alpine regions down to the Adriatic Sea. The Slavs also occupied the Great and Small Plains of Hungary. For a hundred years the Slavs were lords of the Central European Danubian crossroads. Against the Germans they had a good frontier on the West, but were worse placed on the East when in the seventh century the Avars penetrated to the Hungarian Plain, and pressed on along the Danube to the West. They reached the territory of present-day Austria, and thence advanced on the one hand into the Bavaria and Thuringia of today, and on the other hand along the river Morava to the Gateway of Moravia. Thus the Slavs settled in the Danubian basin found themselves under the yoke of the Avars. The Avars passed through the Gateway of Moravia and penetrated to German territory, the present-day Saxony. Only the Bohemian basin (the Hercynian Forest) held out against them. *It lay outside the line of all the military routes of ancient times.* It had no connection by water with the Danube,

although from the geographical point of view it pertains by virtue of its mountains (the Sudetes) to the Danube and Southern Europe.

Policy of West and East in Ancient Times

A revolt against the Avars about the middle of the seventh century resulted in the rise in the Danubian area of the first great Slavonic empire under Samo, a Frank general. It is said that the Slavs from the Baltic to the Adriatic belonged to this empire. The Slavonic empire of Samo did not, however, last long. In the eighth century Charlemagne, the founder of the first Roman Empire of the German nation, marched along the Danube with a great army against the Avars. The Slavs of Bohemia and Moravia were his allies. After the wiping out of the Avars the Slav lands on the Danube were converted to Christianity. They were once more the neighbours of the Byzantine Empire.

Just as the Romans did not desire to advance deep to the North beyond the middle and upper reaches of the Danube, so too were the Greeks disinclined to penetrate beyond the lower reaches of that river into the Hungarian and Ukrainian Plains. The eastern portion of the Roman Empire which held its ground was a centre of antique culture, but *politically* it was *on the defensive*. On the soil of the old Western Roman Empire there had in the meantime arisen the Empire of Charlemagne, primitive in culture but very active in the political sphere. Both empires, the Western one

of Charlemagne and the Eastern one of Byzantium, were Christian. Both had strong support in the religious unity and organisation of the Church which represented a much more powerful influence over the mediaeval Christian States than the present League of Nations over the States of to-day. The two Christian Empires, however, had each its own ecclesiastical Head. Byzantium feared that owing to its common frontiers with the empire of Charlemagne it would soon fall under the power of the Church of Rome, and therefore took great care that the Germanic forces should not seize the Danubian crossroads and dominate the Danubian basin. The nomadic pagan Mongols who from time to time wedged themselves in between the two empires and who occupied the Hungarian Plain served the Greeks in this aim. None the less Charlemagne became master of the Danubian area. It is only natural that the Greeks were interested that their neighbours the Slavs who were in subjection to the Germans should attain their freedom as speedily as possible. The Greeks thus gave the impulse to the creation of the Great Moravian Empire on the Danubian crossroads. Just as the Slavs had united a century previously under Avar menace from the East, so now they united under the German menace from the West. Svatopluk, Prince of Moravia, even drove the Germans out of Pannonia. Simultaneously the Slav tribe of the Czechs, settled in the Hercynian Forest, undertook incursions to the West, and inflicted a defeat upon the German King Ludwig.

Greek aid, however, proved too feeble from the political side, and the Danubian Slavs in the end sought

to come to terms with the Franks. The Greeks repeated their game of the preceding century, and in the Hungarian Plain there appeared new nomads—the Magyars. As late as the year 902 the Slavs were victorious over the Magyars, but six years later they were defeated, and the Magyars occupied the middle Danube as far as the Enns, and made incursions to Germany along the Danube and via the Gateway of Moravia.

This time there was no getting rid of the wedge of nomadic Magyars that had been driven between the Slavs of Central Europe. The political centre of gravity of the Central European Slavs up to the arrival of the Magyars had been somewhere near Bratislava. Now it was shifted to better protected ground in the Hercynian Forest—to the Bohemian basin. The pressure exerted by the Magyars was worse than that which had been exerted by the Germanic tribes. The Slavs in the North therefore joined the Germans, with whom they were moreover connected by community of religion, against the Magyars. The Danubian crossroads now became the object of a struggle between the Germans and the Magyars who dominated the Danube as far as the Enns and were also masters of the Gateway of Moravia. In the middle of the tenth century the Magyars succumbed however, to the combined attack of the Germans and Czechs. They were driven from the middle Danube and from Moravia to beyond the bridgehead of Bratislava and the Germans founded their Ostmark—their Eastern March or frontier—on the middle Danube. The loss of the Danubian crossroads was serious for the Magyars; they were compelled to submit to Germanic dominion and accept Christ-

ianity. Rome, whose sword the Germans were, now secured dominion over the whole of Central Europe down to the Balkans, with the exception of the northern Slavonic regions from the Elbe eastwards, which were now flanked from the South, from Bohemia and the Gateway of Moravia. At this epoch the Poles, too, were converted to Christianity. From this moment dated the German policy which sought at all costs to prevent a political union of the Catholic Slavs of the North, that is the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Poles and the Wends. The Slovaks remained under Magyar sway. As soon as the Poles attempted to wield any influence in Bohemia or the Czechs in Poland, the Germans always frustrated the attempt either by skilful politics or by force.

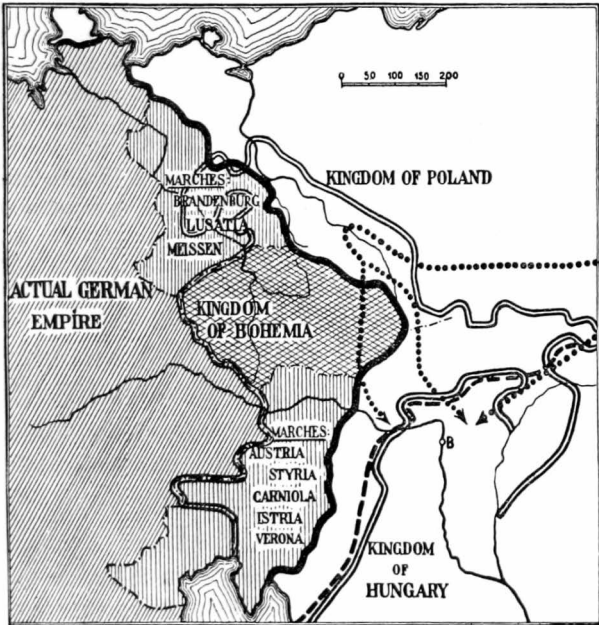
The Czech State

From the tenth century the lands of the Bohemian Crown—Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia—were definitely orientated, from the political standpoint, towards the West, towards the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation founded by Charlemagne. In the eleventh century the Magyars made themselves independent of service to the Empire, and thus the Bratislava Pass became the frontier between the German Empire and the East. Between the Kingdom of Poland and the German Empire there still at that time ran a zone of pagan Slavs inhabiting the Elbe basin against whom the Germans undertook various expeditions. They gradually subjugated them and established marches on their territory.

The rulers of Bohemia of that day pursued a realistic, Central-European policy. Their power, as Krofta writes, they extended not by fighting but by valuable services rendered to the German sovereigns. From the twelfth century the Princes of Bohemia were Electors, and thus secured great political influence in the German Empire.

The Princes of Bohemia of that day strove to take political advantage of the special geographical situation of the Czech lands against the German West and East, where they linked up with Poland and Hungary. For its complete independence, however, the Czech State needed connection along the "Amber Route" to the South, to Venice and Rome. This was made impossible for it by the German Ostmark which extended from the Enns as far as to the Leitha and Bratislava.

Towards the middle of the thirteenth century Tartars from the Ukrainian steppes invaded the Danubian basin in various groups. The main current came by way of the Užok Pass and aimed for Buda, while another marched along the northern slopes of the Carpathians through Poland to Silesia, whence, after the Battle of Lehnice, they changed their direction and proceed via the Gateway of Moravia and the Jablunkov Pass to Hungary. They did not remain in Hungary, however, but returned to their old settlements in the steppes of Ukraina and Western Siberia. It is interesting that the Bohemian basin, protected by the army of the Czech King Václav I, remained immune from the Tartar invasion. One of the Tartar vanguards in Moravia was defeated there, near Olomouc, by King Václav in the year 1241. *Again the Bohemian*



- Kingdom of Bohemia within the frontiers of the Roman Empire in the thirteenth century
- German Empire in the thirteenth century
- German marches established against the Slavs and Magyars
- Direction of the Tartar invasion in the thirteenth century
- Most westerly frontier of the Turkish dominion in Central Europe in the sixteenth century
- The Bohemian-Austrian-Hungarian State in the first half of the sixteenth century

basin had stood like a great fortress against pressure from the East.

In the thirteenth century the Bohemian King, Přemysl Otakar II attempted to establish a fourth Slavonic State in the Danubian basin and at its crossroads. He made the great political error, however, of resisting the Empire. The dispute was won by the Habsburgs who from that moment established themselves firmly on the middle Danube and began with success to follow the line of policy in which Přemysl Otakar II had failed. They built up on the Danubian crossroads a State that gradually dominated the whole of Central Europe.

The attempts of the last members of the Přemyslide dynasty to look for support to the East, to Poland and Hungary, came to nothing.

By the succession of the Luxembourg dynasty to the Bohemian throne, the Crown of Bohemia was closely allied with the German Empire, but secured absolute independence within the framework of that Empire. The Luxembourgs extended their sway over the territories to the north of the Sudetes—to Brandenburg and Silesia. Then came the Hussite Wars in which the Bohemian Crown lost all its territories except Bohemia and Moravia, though it temporarily gained Slovakia.

Under Sigismund, who was not only German Emperor but also King of Bohemia and King of Hungary, the lands of the Bohemian Crown were orientated towards the Danube basin. On the death of Sigismund the Bohemian Crown passed to Albrecht II of Austria, and thus came into being the first *triune State*—

Austria—the lands of the Bohemian Crown—Hungary. When, after the death of George of Poděbrady, the throne of Bohemia passed to the Jagellons, there arose the huge *triune State of Bohemia-Poland-Hungary* which for half a century dominated the whole of *Central Europe*. At that epoch a new pressure was experienced in the Danubian basin, coming from the Balkans. This was from the Turks.

The Habsburg Confederation and the Turks

The Turkish menace called for a new political organisation of Central Europe *and as a consequence for a new politico-strategic balance on the middle Danube*. Ferdinand of Habsburg was elected King of Bohemia and of Hungary, but his rule extended in the latter country only to the northern regions, the present-day Slovakia, and to the western belt of the Little Hungarian Plain. In his Confederation Slovakia was once again united with the Kingdom of Bohemia which was now the focus and main element of the front against the Turks.

The Turks had become a very important factor in European politics. In 1529 they appeared for the first time before the gates of Vienna as the allies of Francis I, the French King, who wished to become German Emperor and with the aid of the Turks to overcome his rival Charles V of the Habsburg dynasty. The Habsburgs held out successfully against the concentrated Franco-Turkish onslaught. Charles V succeeded

first in humiliating the Pope and overcoming the French opposition. To get the better of the revolt of the Protestant princes Charles decided to pay tribute to the Turks. The German rulers, however, made themselves independent, and with Charles V the Roman Empire of the German Nation came to an end.

The Confederation represented by Bohemia-Austria-Hungary at the Danubian crossroads found itself in the sixteenth century thus exposed to two powerful thrusts—that of Protestant Germany in the North, and that of the Turks in the South. *The Thirty Years War waged by the Bohemian-Austrian-Hungarian Confederation against the thrust from the North ended with the loss of a portion of the territories of the Bohemian Crown north of the Sudetes*, and with a gradual centralisation of that Confederation. After the Peace of Westphalia the leading role among the North German States fell to *Prussia*.

While in the North the territories of the Czech State had been reduced, those of Hungary in the South had gradually been recovered, with the aid of Czech troops, from the Turks who were slowly being thrust back to the Balkans. This caused the lands of the Bohemian Crown to lose some of their importance, and the central offices of State were moved from Prague to the banks of the Danube, to the crossroads represented by Vienna. The centre of gravity of Austrian policy was moved to a spot which offered hopes of success—to the South, to *Hungary and Italy*. In the meantime Prussia in the North strengthened her position, and in the eighteenth century gained Silesia and Kladsko (Glatz) at the expense of Austria. This reduced the

lands of the Bohemian Crown to the Bohemian basin and the Gateway of Moravia.

The Turkish thrust which for three centuries had been directed north-westwards along the Danube was replaced in the eighteenth century by German pressure exerted precisely in the opposite direction. Besides that, two other thrusts awakened to new life: one from the South-west along the old Roman routes, represented by the gradual risorgimento of Italy, and the other along the old Mongolian routes from the Russian steppes where the Russian Empire was coming to life.

The French Revolution and Napoleon intensified all these thrusts against Central Europe, and brought about a state of affairs reminiscent of that which existed at the commencement of our era. In the Napoleonic wars, in which France was opposed to Austria, the old military routes to Central Europe along the upper and middle reaches of the Danube and the well-known Gateway of Moravia again came into their own. *The Bohemian basin was scarcely touched by these wars.* The Battle of Slavkov (Austerlitz) was fought at the Moravian Gate. Napoleon was then advancing to meet the Russian army marching into the Danubian basin by the northern route of the Tartars.

Had Napoleon had the crossroads on the Danube politically well assured, the map of Europe in the nineteenth century would have presented a different appearance. In 1813 the Bohemian basin, which he had on his flank in his operations in Saxony and Silesia, proved fatal to him in the end. It was thence that he was taken in the rear at Leipzig. *Without commanding the middle Danube no one could dominate the*

northern sector of Central Europe. Only as an ally of a Danubian confederation could France operate successfully against Germany or against Italy.

Revival of the Meridian Thrusts

The liquidation of the Napoleonic menace meant the revival of the old tension in Central Europe. The Danubian Habsburg Monarchy came soon into collision with nationalist Italy. The pressure from the South began to be exerted upon it, and this was combined with the much more intense pressure from the North for which Prussia was responsible. Up to the year 1848 the Habsburg Monarchy was the political leader of Central Europe, and alongside France the greatest European Power. After the Napoleonic Wars a third Power came on the scene—Russia. Prussia came fourth.

Against Austria that dominated the Danubian crossroads *the two meridian thrusts*—the Prussian and the Italian—united in 1866. After a short war Austria was deprived of influence over the northern and the southern portions of Central Europe. She was excluded from the Federation of German States, and thrust out of Northern Italy.

Central Europe was then re-shaped under the leadership of Prussia which, after its successful war against France in 1870-71, was converted into the German Empire. This Empire determined upon a policy similar to that of the mediaeval first Empire (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation), namely, to dominate Central Europe. Under the patronage of the Ger-

man Empire there was formed the Triple Alliance of Germany-Austria-Italy, an alliance which was declared to be a defensive one. The whole of Central Europe was again united but for the Balkans, towards which three thrusts in all were now directed from the Danubian basin the ancient Roman (Italy), the old Mongolian (Russia) and the old Germanic (Germany). Austria as a middle Danubian State which had formerly held the Danube and the leadership throughout the whole of Central Europe, now gradually became the arena of thrusts from the Danubian periphery.

After the formation of the Triple Alliance in 1879 Austria-Hungary was in reality only a German "Ostmark" on an enlarged scale. Through the skilful policy of Bismarck the interests of Austria were directed towards the Balkans where Austria, by the annexion of 1908, gained the Turkish territories of Bosnia and Hercegovina. This brought to a head the Austro-Russian and the Austro-Italian differences.

Austria-Hungary prior to the Great War represented a geographically perfect entity, for it included a great part of the territories within the mountain arch that encloses the south of Central Europe and forms the line of the Alps-Sudetes-Carpathians. Only Galicia and the Tyrol lay at the sources of foreign rivers. Bohemia belonged to the Danube basin by reason of her lofty frontier mountains through which the Elbe breaks on its way northward.

Germany, as the strongest European State, exploited the docility of Austria to ensure connection with the Balkans and across the bays with Asia Minor. *Here*

arose the idea of the Berlin-Baghdad line which is nothing but a prolongation of the old military Rhine-Danube route to the gates of Persia.

The Importance of the Bohemian Basin

If we follow the changes which the Danubian basin has undergone in the last two thousand years we see that only one corner has been spared grave and bloody alterations. This is *the Bohemian basin*, which belongs to the Danubian region not merely by reason of its rivers but also by its geographical structure.

Some time in the fifth century the Slavs settled in this basin; they had possibly lived there still earlier. They appointed their own rules and thus preserved their independence for 1200 years. Twice they had to choose between West and East, and finally decided for the West. When they were attacked by superior forces whether from West or East they always defended themselves. They drove out the Germanic invaders; they did not allow the Avars, the Magyars or the Tartars to enter. *In face of the frontier forests all advances from West to East and from East to West came to a halt.* None penetrated there either from the South or from the North.

The Bohemian basin checked the advance of the Germanic forces along the Danube to the East, dividing them up. It also split up the advance of the Mongols towards the West. Even the Tartars did not venture far to the West along the northern slopes of the Sudete

mountains, to the Elbe, knowing that they would have on their flank and in their rear the army of the King of Bohemia. The case was the same with the Magyars who penetrated to Bavaria and to Thuringia along the Danube. The Bohemian ruler in the end attacked them from the rear, and in Moravia defeated their flank forces designed to cover the Magyar invasion of Bavaria and Thuringia against the Bohemian basin.

The Bohemian basin represented from ancient times an extensive fortress which defended the Danubian area against pressure from the North-west, and at the same time protected the North-west of Central Europe from pressure issuing from the South and the South-east. This huge bastion, protected on all sides by frontier mountains, maintained, via the Gateway of Moravia, connection with the East and with the Hungarian basin. Whoever took up his position on the middle Danube and possessed the Bohemian basin was splendidly secured against any thrust from the North-west. This was proved when the confederation of Bohemia-Austria-Hungary was formed, whose dynasty — the Habsburgs—at the dawn of the modern age ultimately ruled over half the world. Whoever held the Bohemian basin could defend himself also on the Danube against pressure from the East. Whoever held the Bohemian basin successfully defended himself also against pressure from the South-east, just as the Bohemian-Austrian State resisted the Turks who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had occupied five-sixths of Hungary.

As the Germanic tribes at the commencement of our era had occupied and held possession of the Bohemian

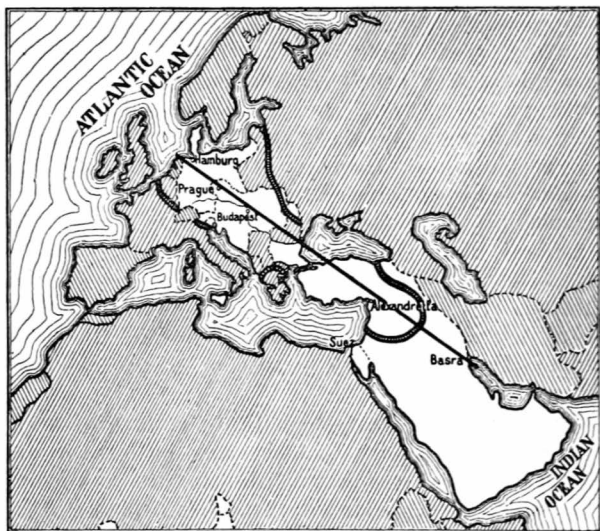
basin for several centuries, this basin then represented *a taking-off ground for invasion* of the Danubian regions and the Apennine Peninsula. As soon as the Habsburgs had got rid of the Turkish menace, and had politically neutralised the northern sector of Central Europe, they commenced an advance on the Apennine Peninsula. This thrust to the South was very effectively covered as against the North by the Bohemian basin. It was for this reason that Bismarck said: "Whoever is master of Bohemia is master of Europe". *In 1866 it was demonstrated that whoever is master of Bohemia has also a free road to the middle Danube via the Gateway of Moravia. So long as Bohemia holds out the Gateway of Moravia is impassable from the North. So long as Bohemia holds out the Danubian pass beyond the Enns to the East is likewise impassable.*

The case of the year 1805 cannot be deduced to refute this thesis. Bohemia had not then become a factor in the operations, since the Russian reinforcements failed to arrive in time, or better expressed, Napoleon appeared on the Enns before the Austrian General Mack could retreat with his army from Ulm into Bohemia, there to await juncture with the Russians. *If Mack had escaped Napoleon's encircling movement, Napoleon could not safely have proceeded along the Danube without previously occupying Bohemia, for an attack from Bohemia would have thrust him southwards to the Alps from where he would have had no communications.*

The German Advance to the "Eurasian Axis"

In 1866 when there was a danger that France would take up arms on behalf of Austria, and Prussia was expecting war on two fronts, Moltke decided to occupy Bohemia to keep Austria in check, and to throw himself upon France. Having possession of Bohemia he would, after victory over France, have had an excellent jumping-off ground against Vienna, should the Austrians desire to continue the struggle. Prussia was, of course, obliged to reckon on help from Russia, otherwise Prussia's situation would be a very grave one. Bismarck was well aware of this and therefore did not desire to arouse France or deeply humiliate Austria.

What could not be accomplished by force of arms (the annexation of the Danubian area by force to the German Empire) was accomplished in the way of diplomacy by the creation of the Triple Alliance. *Bismarck saw clearly the internal difficulties of the Habsburg Monarchy* which could only with difficulty stand out against the yearnings of the Slavonic-Latin majority of its population. He therefore offered Austria peace on the German frontier so that she might devote herself to her internal political struggle. Austria paid for this by dependence as a Power upon Germany. She became a jumping-off ground for the German advance along the "transversal Eurasian axis", which German geographical experts drew from Hamburg via Prague, Budapest, Constantinople, Alexandretta to Basra on the Persian Gulf. From Map 3 we see that



- The thick black line from Hamburg to Basra represents the "transversal Eurasian axis"
- Fronts round this axis in 1917
- ☉ The Allies
- ☉ The Neutral States

half of this axis crosses the European continent. In 1914 only one-fourth of the European half crossed German territory. This means that Germany alone firmly dominated only about one-eighth of the "transversal Eurasian axis". By alliance with Austria, how-

ever, she secured a further two-eighths, and by friendship with Turkey the Asiatic half. There thus remained only the last one-eighth in the Balkans running through Rumania and Bulgaria. Bulgaria was also won over. The sole obstacle now was Rumania, and Serbia, lying to one side, but possessing the line of the Orient Express. This obstacle was removed in the course of the Great War.

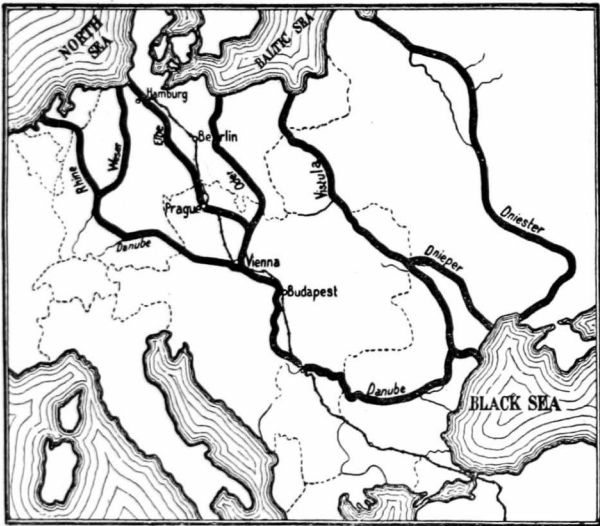
The "transversal Eurasian axis" of the German geographers is nothing other than the shortest connection overland between the Atlantic Ocean (North Sea) and the Indian Ocean (Persian Gulf). With this project of railway communications there was also linked up a project for communication by waterways as shown on Map 4. It was a matter of constructing canals between the German rivers flowing into the North and Baltic Seas; in particular it was designed to connect up the Rhine, the Elbe and the Oder with the Danube, and finally, should that plan succeed, of joining up the Vistula with the Dniester in the zone where Europe in the East is narrowest.




The Danube Basin Opposes Germany in the Great War

If Austria-Hungary had not allowed herself to be won over by Bismarck in the Nineties of last century for aggressive aims in the Balkans there would never have been any Great War. Germany, however well-armed she might have been, could not have ventured to attack a France secured by an alliance with Russia.

Germany needed to precipitate a war before 1917, for by then Russia and France were to be fully prepared. As Germany could not herself provoke a war and thus run the risk of being after all left in the lurch by Austria, she was compelled to support Austria's Balkan aspirations which were an excellent approach to *a war in which Germany could hasten to the assistance of Austria*. In this way not only was Austrian collaboration assured but Austria was also directly subordinated to Germany from the strategical standpoint. Germany could not continue to elaborate her jumping-off grounds along the "Eurasian axis" until she had eliminated the menace threatening from the flank her further advance into Asia Minor. This menace was the Franco-Russian Entente.

At the outbreak of the Great War Germany had just the same army as Russia—about 120 divisions—103 infantry and 11 cavalry divisions. Austria-Hungary had 80 divisions, France 95 and Italy 40 divisions. In order to raise 50 new divisions Germany required 8 months during the War. An English expert recently declared that Turkey had been prevented by political means from entering into the War on the side of the Central Powers, the Great War could have ended two years sooner than it did. Turkey in Asia Minor in 1917 eventually held 30 Allied divisions engaged. But at the beginning of the War Austria kept 80 Allied divisions (three-fourths of the Russian Army) engaged, thus enabling Germany to "dig herself in", and prolong the struggle. If, before 1914, the Allies had succeeded in freeing Austria from the influence of Germany, the Great War, as we have already said,



-  Hamburg Bagdad Line
-  Projected river canals linking up the North Sea with the Baltic and Black Seas
-  Frontiers of the various States in 1914

would never have occurred. Even if, despite that, it had broken out, it would not have lasted 4 years, but would have ended in 4 months as the original theory assumed.

Austria-Hungary, which from the standpoint of internal politics was very weak, and from the military angle very imperfect, succeeded nevertheless under the

leadership of Germany in placing 80 divisions in the field and maintaining them there to the end of the War. This was one-third of the forces which Germany with its population of 67,000,000 sent into the War altogether (Austria-Hungary had a population of 54,000,000). This was creditable help on the part of Austria when we remember that by straining her powers to the utmost France sent 115 divisions into the field, and England 90.

Austria-Hungary enabled Germany to carry out a mobilisation of technical means for systematic trench warfare in which the Allied forces long struggled unsuccessfully against German material. If the Austrian troops of non-German and non-Hungarian nationality had not on the first opportunity surrendered as prisoners to the Allies, Austria-Hungary with Germany's help would have been able to put a further 50 divisions in the field. Some 2,000,000 Slavs and members of the Latin races serving in the Austrian ranks were taken prisoner in Russia and Italy.

Germany, France and Serbia ultimately placed 3.5 divisions in the field per every million of population, Turkey 2.5 divisions, and England 2 divisions, but Austria-Hungary only 1.5 division. This is to be explained solely by the *lack* of Austrian cadres which especially in the first year of the War were terribly attenuated. Austria sent at once into the War an army of 1,500,000, and by the close of 1914 reinforcements of a further 800,000 men. At the beginning of 1915 the Austrian strength was only 800,000 men, and only 516,000 rifles. The losses sustained in 1914 were of-

ficially acknowledged at 1,270,000 men. Of that number, 260,000 had been taken prisoner, and 210,000 were on the sick list. Among the sick, about half the number at least consisted of those who intended at all costs to avoid the duty of fighting for Austria. *The Austrian army lost in the year 1914, through the passive resistance conducted by the down-trodden Slavonic and Latin nations, about 400,000 men, or approximately one-third of the original fighting force.* The Germans, the English and the French had 2 killed for every 1 prisoner, whereas of the Austrians 5 were taken prisoner for every 2 killed. This is the best proof of how the Slavonic and Latin races of the Habsburg Monarchy demonstrated against the enslavement of Austria by Germany.

Austria's unjust policy towards her nationalities deprived the Austrian Army in the field of at least 3,000,000 fighters, of whom 2,000,000 went voluntarily into captivity. If the whole population of Austria had acquiesced in the Austrian servitude to Germany, *Austria could have sent into the field at least 130 divisions instead of the 80 she did send.* This was strikingly reflected, too, in the course of the military operations. Bismarck had asserted that "the nations of Austria would follow their old Emperor when he mounted his horse", that is, if he went forth to war. But this time Bismarck was wrong. With their old Emperor Francis Joseph when he kindled the Great War there went only the Austrian Germans and the Magyars.

The Austrian Slavs and Latin Peoples on the Side of the Allies

The resistance shown by the Slavonic and Latin nations of Austria to the alliance with Germany had a far-reaching strategical importance for the Allies. If all the Austrian nations had indeed followed their Emperor as soon as he mounted his horse, the fact would have manifested itself at once in 1914 in a much less measure of success for the Russian army in Galicia, and in the defeat of Serbia. Bulgaria entered the War on Germany's side as early as 1914, and thus Germany was enabled to dominate the "transversal Eurasian axis" in the Winter of 1914 instead of in the Winter of 1915.

If the Slavonic and Latin races of Austria had obediently followed their Emperor, Russia would have been so thoroughly defeated that its collapse would have occurred as early as 1915 instead of in 1917. In this case neither Italy (in 1915) nor Rumania (in 1916) would have been able to participate in the War on the side of the Allies. If Russia had fallen out of count at the beginning of 1916 the situation would have looked black indeed for the Allies. In 1918, after the collapse of Russia, the Allies were able to place only 274 divisions in the field against the 370 divisions of the Central Powers. If Austria had been politically consolidated and had in 1917 placed 130 divisions in the field instead of only 80, the Central Powers would have had altogether 420 divisions, against which the Allies, exclusive of Italy and Rumania would in the Spring of 1917 have had in all 211



divisions (115 French, 90 English and 6 Belgian). By the Spring of 1917 there could thus have existed an almost two-fold preponderance on the part of the Central Powers, a preponderance which not even the entry of America into the War could have neutralized.

The Slavonic and Latin nations of the Habsburg Monarchy, by preventing Austria from getting together 40 new divisions, deprived Germany and Austria in 1914 of victory over Serbia, and in 1915 of a crushing triumph against Russia. But that was not all. The Slavonic and Latin nations of Austria did not content themselves by merely going over to the Allies as prisoners of war. They also joined the ranks of the Allied armies whom they assisted up to the year 1918 with a force of 16 divisions (6 Czechoslovak, 3 Serb, Croat and Slovene, 3 Polish and Ruthenian, 2 Rumanian and 1 Italian).

It is frequently asserted that the German strategic calculations in 1914 were very dubious. They were indeed so if it was assumed that Austria was a politically strong State that would wage war with at least the same vitality as France. In reality Austria did not render Germany military assistance worthy of a State of 54 million inhabitants. That was a contribution to be expected of a State of scarcely 30 millions. As a matter of fact the Austrian forces proved about 60 per cent of the estimated value. This was a great upset in the calculations of German strategy.

A fertile source of aid to the Allies and a powerful enemy to Germany was the longing of the Slavonic and Latin nations in Austria for freedom. This it was that suppressed in embryo 50 divisions which it prevented

the Germans from raising in Austria, and manifested itself in 16 divisions which fought on the side of the Allies.

None knew so well the strength of *German organization*, and none so opposed it as did precisely the Slavs and the Latins of Central Europe. The Habsburg Monarchy collapsed after the victorious advance of the Allies under the French Marshal d'Esperey from the South in the Balkan Peninsula in the Autumn of 1918. From there was thus made the first strategic breach in the transversal Eurasian axis.

II PRESENT-DAY PERSPECTIVES

The New Adjustment of the Danubian Basin after 1919

On the transversal Eurasian axis live not only the Germans in the Reich and in Austria, but also the Magyar (Hungarian) nation, who have lost their dominating position on the Danube over the Slavs and the Latins in the Hungarian basin. The Magyars yearn for a restoration of their old position. This of course is impossible without violence to the States that incorporated former Hungarian territories within their frontiers, namely, *Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania*. These three are all *Danubian States*. They are closely connected by the fact *that they form three-fourths of the arch of mountains that, running from East to West, enclose the southern portion of Central Europe against the North*. A breach in this arch is made by German Austria which dominates the middle Danube from the Inn to beyond the Leitha, that is to say, the sector which has always been the key to the domination of Central Europe.

Austria is inhabited by Germans just as are the northern portion of Switzerland, the western and northern frontier districts of Czechoslovakia, the northern frontier regions of Italy, and the western and northern frontier areas of Poland. Apart from the Germans now living in Polish territory, no German within the territory of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Italy was, up to the Great War, a subject of the German Reich, and thus was not, after the Great War, forcibly sundered from the Reich.

The Germans living outside the frontiers of the Reich participated for the most part actively in the government of the State where they were domiciled—in Austria, in Switzerland, and in Czechoslovakia. These are the States which form the mountain arch referred to separating Northern from Southern Europe. We have included with them Rumania which does not, however, border directly on Germany. The "roof" States forming the rampart of the southern sector of Central Europe against the northern, possess a German element in the following proportions:

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Proportion of Germans</i>
Switzerland	4,200,000	3,000,000
Austria	6,800,000	6,000,000
Czechoslovakia . .	15,500,000	3,200,000
Rumania	18,500,000	800,000
	45,000,000	13,000,000

Leaving Rumania aside, we find that in Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia, which blocked Ger-

many's path to the South-east of Europe there was prior to March 1938 a total population of 26,500,000, of whom approximately 12,000,000 were Germans. In Switzerland and in Czechoslovakia after the Anschluss there remain 6,000,000 Germans, one million of whom are scattered throughout the whole country. France as regards the French is in the same position, for in Belgium there are 4,000,000 French and in Switzerland 1,000,000, a total of 5,000,000. If she followed the example of the Third Reich France could claim the 3,500,000 French that live in Canada.

Italy, standing on the heights of the Brenner, looked down from the South into the valley of the Danube in Austria, as Czechoslovakia looked down into it from the North. This Austrian valley guarded by Italy on the South and by the Czechoslovaks on the North was till recently an independent State with a small army of its own. Its Government joined it up to the block of States of "the Rome Protocols", and thus placed it under the protection of Italy.

In this situation the German post-War influence upon the "transversal Eurasian axis" was considerably restricted. The European portion of that axis measures 1750 kilometres. At the close of the Great War it was entirely under German control. Prior to 1914 under the alliance with Austria-Hungary it was 1350 kilometres; the sector through Rumania and Serbia was lacking. In the year 1937 Germany had only 470 kilometres of the "transversal Eurasian axis", that is, 900 kilometres less than in 1914, and 1350 kilometres less than in 1918.

From Map 3 we see that the "transversal Eurasian

axis" passes through Czechoslovakia, the North-east of Hungary and through Rumania. While Germany has 470 kilometres of the "axis", Czechoslovakia controls 480 kilometres, Hungary 200, and Rumania 600. These three States thus stand in the way of a restoration of the German power over the European sector of the Eurasian axis, and thus dominion over the South-east parts of Central Europe.

The Strategical Focus and Basis against the East

All those who have read Chancellor Hitler's "My Struggle" know that the "Third Reich" must as soon as possible set out on a great expedition to the East in search of space which it sees existing on Russian territory. The map shows us that the Germany of 1937 had *no common frontier with Russia*, nor has the Germany of to-day. Between them from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea stretches a belt of small and medium-sized States. The narrow strip represented by East Prussia, dependent upon the sea for communication with the rest of Germany cannot be an adequate basis. Somewhat better, of course, would be a basis formed of the eastern parts of Polish territory. From the map, however, we can see that even such a basis would be inadequate, since via Rumania and Czechoslovakia it could be outflanked from the South to a considerable depth, taking into consideration the effect of the treaties of alliance between Russia, Czechoslovakia and France.

Germany cannot venture any considerable expedition to the East until she is master of the whole sector of the "transversal Eurasian axis", and until she has brought Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania within the sphere of her influence. As soon as she accomplishes this the flanking of the connections on the Berlin-Moscow line of operations from the South is eliminated, and at the same time Germany gains a much wider strategic basis for an advance into Russia. From Map 5 we see that in case of a German-Polish alliance Germany could command against Russia a strategic basis extending from Riga to the upper reaches of the Dniester—a length of 1,000 kilometres. This basis would, however, be very poorly equipped in the way of communications. We know from experience in the Great War what difficulties had to be overcome before a superior German unit could be transferred from Pinsk to the Western front. The rear of the Riga-Dniester basis is, however, seriously narrowed, and a line from Frydland (on the northern frontier of Bohemia) to Stettin represents a corridor that is only 250 kilometres wide. What this means at a time of powerful air forces is obvious, especially when we again recall the treaties of alliance between Russia, France and Czechoslovakia. *The main German fighting forces, whether reserves of men or war material to-day lie west of the strategic neck represented by the distance between Frydland and Stettin.* This unpleasant defilé must therefore at all costs be extended south-wards. Czechoslovakia must be eliminated from the Franco-Russian alliance. The German strategical basis against Russia must be extended to the Black Sea, and must therefore run from Riga

to Odessa. The centre of gravity of the German rear must be transferred from Western Germany *close to the East and behind the centre of the strategic front from Riga to Odessa*, that is, it must be moved to the Danubian basin, to the area which was, and which still is, the key to Central Europe, to the space between the Enns and the Leitha, to Vienna from where very effective communications radiate towards the East, to the North-east and to the South. Vienna and Budapest represented in the Great War, and still represent to-day, centres of communication of the first order as against the Balkans, the South-west Russia (Ukraine) and even against Poland.

Menace also for the West

In order that these centres of communication in the middle Danubian area should of use against the East it was first of all essential to take possession of them, that is, to subject Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Rumania to German influence.

German plans against the East can only interest the West of Europe when Germany has become a dictator and by her great power secures dominance over Central Europe without taking a single acre of Russian soil. As soon as Germany succeeds in extending the Frydland-Stettin strategic basis from 250 to 500 kilometres, so as to make it run from Stettin to the Drave, that is across Czechoslovakia and Austria, as soon as she succeeds in dominating the triangle of communications Vienna-Prerov-Budapest, and when she begins to build

up her strategic centre of gravity round this triangle with the aid of the industries of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Saxony, Hungary and Upper Silesia, she will be strategically more static not only as against the East *but also against the West*. If we take a compass and measure the distance from the biggest junction of communications in Czechoslovakia—at Přerov—to the Russian frontier, we shall find it is just the same as the distance on the other side from Přerov to the French frontier, that is, nearly 700 kilometres. If we now apply our compass with this span of 700 kilometres to a point on the German-French frontier the other point of the instrument will reach the river Garonne near Bordeaux and the Southern Pyrenees. If we repeat the same process from the Russo-Rumanian front the other point of the compass will reach to Charkov and the Polish-Russian frontier beyond Moscow.

In brief: *as soon as Germany succeeds in building up the heart of her strategic production within the triangle represented by Vienna, Přerov and Budapest, she will there be equally secure as are the French places of production under the Pyrenees and on the Garonne, or as the Russian industries on the line between Moscow and Charkov.* The recent utterance of Marshal Göring to the effect that "Vienna will be the heart of the Third Reich" confirms our supposition that Germany will seek to transfer the most sensitive organs of the Empire's power to the Danubian basin.

The Importance of Czechoslovakia on the "Transversal Axis"

Of special interest is the position of Czechoslovakia which stretches across the summit of the arch of the Alps-Sudetes-Carpathians. It is a most important guardian of the routes into the Danubian basin from all sides, for

1. with the cooperation of Italy it controls the old Germanic route to the Danubian basin from the Rhine and the Main,

2. with the cooperation of Poland it controls the old Mongolian-Germanic route to the Danube from the North by way of the Gateway of Moravia,

3. with the cooperation of Rumania it controls the old Mongolian route to the Danubian basin over the Eastern Carpathians by way of the Užok Pass.

If Czechoslovakia were to be broken away from the arch of mountain States protecting the southern portion of Central Europe, all the three ancient military routes to the Danubian basin would be laid open—the Western Germanic route, the Northern Mongolian-German and the Eastern Mongolian. By the suppression of Czechoslovakia Germany would win back 480 kilometres of the "transversal Eurasian axis", which united with Hungary's 200 kilometres would mean a total of 1150 kilometres. By the conquest and liquidation of Czechoslovakia *Germany would thus once more take possession of the Danube basin*, with this difference, that at the outset the European portion of the "*transversal Eurasian axis*" *would be only some 200 kilometres shorter than in 1914.* In the latter half

of the nineteenth century Germany needed to reduce Austria-Hungary in order to get close to the Balkans and within reach of Asia Minor. To-day, in order to attain her old position of dominance over Central Europe and the Danubian basin she would only need to strangle Czechoslovakia.

Austria-Hungary had a population of 54,000,000; Czechoslovakia with Hungary and Austria had 32,000,000. At the same time the whole industry of former Austro-Hungary was on the territory of these three States—three-fourths of it on Czechoslovak territory.

Until recently there were 6 States on the Danube. Three were on the middle Danube: Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary (32,000,000 inhabitants), and the other three on the lower Danube: Rumania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (40,000,000 inhabitants). On the flank of the three States of the middle Danube to the North is Poland (32,000,000 inhabitants), and to the South is Italy (45,000,000). In order to enable Germany to advance further along the Danube on the "transversal Eurasian axis" after overcoming Czechoslovakia *she would have to ensure her flanks either by political action or by war.*

The Incorporation of Austria in Germany

This was partially accomplished in March 1938 by the union of Austria with Germany.

The Third Reich, which at the beginning of the year 1938 already possessed the framework of its

great army of 1914, decided to break through the front represented by the Alps-Sudetes-Carpathians at its most sensitive spot—the valley of the Danube, where there was also the least resistance from the political angle. Austria, saturated with propaganda and as a State almost exclusively German, was unable to put up any resistance. Italy, which on the Berlin-Rome axis was closely tied to Germany by collaboration in Spain and was engaged on the Mediterranean in a dispute with England, could no longer do anything for Austria.

In three days Austria was occupied by German troops who, accompanied by a German air fleet, thus reached the Eastern slopes of the Alps and stood on the threshold of the Little Hungarian Plain at the bridgehead of Bratislava. The key to dominion over Central Europe which from the year 1919 had been on the soil of small neutral Austria and within reach of the Italians now passed into the hands of the Third Reich which thus advanced on the south flank of the "transversal Eurasian axis" a distance of 400 kilometres to the South-east. We have already noted that Czechoslovakia controls some 480 kilometres of that axis. By the Austrian union with Germany the Czechoslovak portion of the axis has been largely flanked. Germany has advanced eastwards to the frontiers of Hungary and Yugoslavia, and in the South has secured a common frontier with Italy.

The position of Czechoslovakia as a military power has become more difficult by the fact that it now has the German army on its South flank and on the frontiers of Slovakia. On the other hand the position of

Hungary which hitherto had no Great Power as a neighbour has substantially altered. The situation of Yugoslavia has also taken an unfavourable turn for that country now borders on two Central European Great Powers (Italy and Germany). Italy has also now a common frontier, like France, with two Great Powers.

Vienna as the greatest centre of Central European communications has now fallen in the hands of Germany which has thus secured an outstanding and central basis of operations in this junction of communications not only against Czechoslovakia but also against Hungary, Yugoslavia and Italy. Towards the East the German power has thus thrust forward its third tentacle. The first is East Prussia, the second is Prussian Silesia, and now the third and most extensive of all is Austria. Prior to the incorporation of Austria the front of the German advance-guards on the East ran from South-west to North-east. At the same time the dangerous eastern spur of Prussian Silesia jutted out beyond the line of Passaus-Eydtkuhnen (Bavaria-East Prussia). After the Anschluss the front of the German advance-guards against the East was straightened out. Now it no longer runs from South-west to North-east but nearly from North to South. At the same time its south wing has moved from Passau near to Bratislava. The protruding "nose" of Prussian Silesia has thus been accommodated to a "level advance".

To enable Austria to become a jumping-off basis of the first order the Germans will have to augment the Austrian railways and the aerodromes that serve for communications between Bavaria, Vienna and Graz.

It will also be essential to increase the number of bridges over the Danube, and finally accelerate the construction of the Rhine-Main-Danube canal which would also have to be deepened. All these schemes, as the German military reviews reveal, are already in full swing. As soon as Austria has been thoroughly lined up to Germany in the matter of communications, the German High Command will be able *rapidly to concentrate* in the East of Austria not only a powerful land army (to its rapid moving elements the Hungarian Plain is a direct temptation), but also a huge air force. Nor is this all. The German High Command has not only established two new army corps of 6 divisions in Austria but has also left there its I fast tank corps, while at Linz it has located the command of the Danubian war fleet. This fleet can be employed with great effect not only against Czechoslovakia but also, and this in particular, against Hungary, and later against Yugoslavia and Rumania. It is only necessary to recall what an important role was played by the Austrian Danubian fleet in the operations against Serbia, and particularly those against Rumania in 1916.

There will thus exist in the immediate future on Austrian territory a powerful vanguard of German military forces of all three arms—land, water and air—facing the direction of the “transversal Eurasian axis”.

Czechoslovakia and Italy

In the Chapter on “The Crossroads of Central European Thrusts” (p. 12.) I referred to the meridian thrusts which for nearly two thousand years have come

into collision in the western portion of Central Europe—from the North the Germanic thrust, and from the South the Latin (Roman) thrust. The aim of both was to secure possession of the strategically important area of the middle Danube, the territory of present-day Austria. After the overthrow of the Roman Empire by the Germanic tribes, the Roman thrust from the South to the Danubian basin was paralysed for nearly 1500 years. It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the Latin element in Central Europe won its freedom and ventured upon new political and military activities there. In the year 1866, with the gain of Venetia, the Italian soldier once again advanced to the eastern foothills of the Alps and to the old direction of the "Amber Route". At the opening of the nineteenth century the great Franco-Italian, Napoleon I, marched with his army from the lowlands of Padua into the Danubian basin. But this was a mere episode. It was only in the Great War that the Roman power advanced again a goodly number of kilometres more to the North in Central Europe. They reached the Brenner. From 1919 to 1935 Italy was the leading Great Power in Central Europe. It dominated the territory of present-day Austria if not *de jure* at least *de facto* by virtue of the "Rome Protocols", and thus held the strategic key to Central Europe in the sector from the Enns to the Leitha, the Hungarian Plain, and with it the Danube to the Yugoslav frontier. Now, after 1800 years, the most northerly frontier of the ancient Roman power was once more reached.

From the year 1935 onwards the new Germany has manifestly established its military predominance in

Central Europe. It exploited the conflict between Italy and Britain to make Italy dependent on the Reich, and in March 1938 suddenly seized Austria. Thus has Italy been shouldered out of the Danubian area where for fifteen years she had held sway as the greatest Power in Central Europe.

German advance to the South-east will be of less interest to Poland than to Italy which is seriously menaced by the German advance to the Adriatic Sea. If Italy is to choose whom she would rather put up with on the Adriatic—Yugoslavia or Germany—she will naturally choose Yugoslavia. Czechoslovakia guarding the Northern approaches to the middle reaches to the Danube is in a flank position against the line of communication from Hamburg to Venice. From the Brenner to Venice is a distance of about 200 kilometres. *Czechoslovakia, hand in hand with Italy in the middle Danube*, could hinder, from her flank position, a further German advance to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Great War demonstrated that to-day ancient strategic methods of the time of Alexander the Great do not suffice for a march into the Near East. Land forces are inadequate without assistance from a fleet. This was grievously felt by the German High Command when it was a question of assisting the Turks against the English who had advanced from Basra towards Baghdad, and from Suez to Damascus. The Berlin-Constantinople-Damascus line could never deliver the Turks the quantity of troops and the quantity of material that was transported to Palestine and to Mesopotamia by English ships. Germany will not therefore be able to make her way to the East until she secures a

footing on the shores of some South-eastern sea—the Adriatic, the Egean or the Black Sea—and establishes bases there for dominating the Eastern position of the Mediterranean.

Which of these seas has Germany ever dominated in the past? Under the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation the Germans dominated the shores of the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Sea. The newly elected German Emperor always crossed the Alps again in order to be crowned in Rome, and always reconquered the Northern Italian towns anew. In the Second Empire of Bismarck, too, Germany through Austria-Hungary and Italy had influence in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Third Empire speaks of thrust towards the East, but this is not a path to world dominion; rather only to the Black Sea which is again a closed sea. Of all the collisions possible in the Danubian basin we may thus rightly regard a German-Italian conflict as the most probable, and in this Italy would be at a great disadvantage if Germany stood at the Brenner, and if she held in addition Prague and the districts of Mohacs. The moment Germany enters the middle Danube and dominates the whole Danubian Pass from the Enns to the Ipel or attains even to Mohacs she would restore the situation that obtained in the eighteenth century, of course under other conditions and possibilities. At that time Austria had rid herself of the Turkish thrust to the Danubian basin, and her ruler as German Emperor commenced a campaign that took him into Italy. The moment the Germans shall be in Mohacs, no fertile



- | | | | |
|-------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| ----- | Hamburg-Basra direction of operations South of the Black Sea | ① | Alps |
| ————— | Line of operations North of the Black Sea | ② | Sudetes and Carpathians |
| | | ③ | Dinaric Alps and Balkan Range |

allied policy as between Italy and the Balkan Entente will be practical.

What follows from all this? If the rampart which Czechoslovakia forms protecting the Danubian basin gives way, this automatically means *the Germans on the Mediterranean*. As soon as Czechoslovakia falls,

the line of the strategic front—Genoa (Italy)-Prague (Czechoslovakia)-Sulina (Rumania)—will be converted into the front Genoa-Sulina. *On this front is lost all the space for internal manœuvre which the Danubian basin offers.* Italy above all will feel that lack. The Germans at Mohacs would find themselves faced with two groups which are separated from one another by the Adriatic—Italy and the Balkan Entente. Italy has a population of 45 millions and the Balkan Entente, including Turkey, 60 millions. A blow against Italy would of course be the more favourable, as, by the defeat of Italy, Germany would secure good harbours not merely on the Adriatic but also on the Mediterranean if she went as far as Genoa. It is, of course, objected that France and England could not look quietly on while Germany thus penetrated to the Mediterranean, as they could not permit either Italy or the Balkan Entente to be left isolated. But is the distance of 180 kilometres from the Brenner to Venice or the 80 kilometres from the Karavanken to Trieste any great obstacle? A blow delivered at the most northerly shore of the Adriatic would separate Italy from the Balkans in a few days.

If Czechoslovakia falls northern Italy, too, comes into the game the moment Germany temporarily desists from further pressure in the East so as to avoid a premature clash with Russia. It is possible that Germany would first seek to provide more thorough support for her south flank which, if she attempts to advance eastwards is now threatened by Czechoslovakia, and after the elimination of Czechoslovakia, the menace could come from Italy, strengthened on the Brenner and the

Karavanken possibly by French, English or American divisions.

The German dream is of a *State with two sea fronts* such as Spain, France or Russia. This second, southern, sea can be, as we have already said, rather the Adriatic than the Black Sea. In 1926 this is, 12 years prior to the Anschluss, a certain Adriaticus wrote in the "Geopolitik" review: "The sight of the majestic chain of the Julian Alps (now the German frontier) reminds the present lords of Trieste that their narrow littoral belt separates a great nation of 78,000,000 souls from their third sea. The Italianisation of this region prior to the Great War as rapidly disappearing. Its complete disappearance would have been a matter of a few years. Now the Italian authorities and the Fascists are attempting to turn the wheel of history in the opposite direction. The present twofold frontier between Germany and the sea in the South is a geopolitical absurdity. Nature herself calls for the opening of a (German) 'window to the Adriatic'."

Up to March 1938 the German pressure southwards was eased by a strategic bolster in the form of Austria as an independent State under the protection of Italy. Now, Austria went to strengthen the new Germany, and the German pressure is felt direct on the Italian frontier. It is therefore a vital interest for Italy not only to follow carefully the further growth of Germany but also to strengthen all who help from the flank to hinder the German pressure southwards. This applies first and foremost to Czechoslovakia, now separated from Italy by German Austria, just as it is separated from France by South Germany.

The Latin element which to the north of the Alps abuts on the western bank of the upper Rhine is distant some 350 kilometres from the Czechoslovak frontier across German territory. To the South of the Alps since the Anschluss there exists from the Karavanken north of Trieste, where the Italian element is found, to the southern frontiers of Czechoslovakia a distance of 250 kilometres. This was an appreciable drawback to the Czechs as early as the Middle Ages when the Hussites wished to link up a connection across German Austria with the Venetian Republic. Thus, then, the maintenance of the strategical front of Genoa-Prague is a vital problem for Italy and the Balkan Entente, not to speak of the Little Entente.

Czechoslovakia and Poland

If Czechoslovakia is a hindrance to the free expansion of Germany to the South, she is equally a hindrance to German expansion to the East. Let us admit that what Chancellor Hitler says is true and that the Germans are preparing a great expedition to the East for Russian soil. It is unthinkable that the Poles would permit their land to be a theatre of war between Germany and Russia as it was in the Great War. There is thus a possibility of a German-Russian collision only by way of the territories of the Little Entente—of Czechoslovakia and Rumania. From a practical point of view there is possible only *the reverse march route from West to East along the old military route of the Tartars: through the Danubian basin via the Eastern Carpathians*. This, however, presupposes the subjugation

tion of Czechoslovakia across whose territory, in particular the Gateway of Moravia, it is essential to pass by numerous lines of communication to the Great Hungarian Plain, and thence over the Eastern Carpathians to the Ukrainian Plain. This means that *the Germans in conjunction with the Hungarians will first gain possession of the southern slopes of the Sudete-Carpathian range.*

Just as it is impossible to advance from the Danubian basin to Constantinople via Yugoslavia without suppressing Italy, so also is it impossible to advance eastwards from the Danubian basin via the Eastern Carpathians to the Black Sea without the neutralisation of Poland. Such neutralisation may be of two kinds: political and military. Political neutralisation means a treaty of friendship and alliance. A treaty of friendship enabling Germany to dominate the Balkans would be complete subjection for Italy. Equally complete subjection for Poland would be implied in a treaty that brought the Germans to the Black Sea.

We repeat that the advance of Germany to the East towards the Black Sea does not lead to world dominion, and that it would meet with much greater resistance than advance southwards to the Balkans and to Constantinople, since Soviet Russia stands in Germany's way to the Black Sea. That advance of Germany into the Ukraine, where she would find herself involved in severe fighting is unthinkable without complete assurance of her flank on the North, that is, the neutralisation of Poland, which could only, like the neutralisation of Italy, be carried out thoroughly by force of arms.

The liquidation of Czechoslovakia would enable Germany to transfer the centre of gravity of her actions against Poland from the Baltic littoral to the Northern slopes of the Sudetes and the Carpathians—against Cracow and Poznań (Posen). We will not consider the possibility of a German-Soviet compact under which the Germans, penetrating to Poland via the Gateway of Moravia would signify complete catastrophe for the Poles. In this case help from Rumania would have as little value as would help for Italy from Yugoslavia were Germany to attack Venice from the North.

The triangle of communications Vienna-Prerov-Budapest referred to in the Chapter on "Menace also for the West" would, after the elimination of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, represent a huge German taking-off ground against Poland and her industrial centres between Ratiborž and Drahobíč. If Czechoslovakia between the North-east Italian frontier and the South-west Polish frontier were dominated by Germany, there would be a space of over 500 kilometres between those frontiers, or a larger one than exists to-day between the French and Czechoslovak frontiers. French aid for Poland, after the liquidation of Czechoslovakia, would have to cover 700 kilometres to the Polish western frontier. This is a distance that practically excludes even cooperation in the air, to say nothing of by land forces. Czechoslovakia shortens the distance to about half as between Poland and France (from 700 to 350 kilometres) and as between Poland and Italy (from 500 to 250 kilometres. This has a decisive importance for collaboration in the air. (According to German statistics the Czechoslovak air arm in 1938 is of equal

strength with that of Poland. Both have upwards of 3,000 machines, that is, about half the strength of the German air force.)

Genoa—Prague—Warsaw

The old theory of war defined a strategic front as a line of important strategic points between which manœuvre is possible.

If the line of operation by which Germany would advance along the transversal Eurasian axis is taken as the line *Hamburg-Prague-Budapest-Constantinople*, the best strategic front at right angles to the route of this thrust is the line *Genoa-Prague-Warsaw*. No states in Central Europe are so dependent upon one another from the point of view of strategy as Italy, Czechoslovakia and Poland. If Prague falls out of the strategic front *Genoa-Warsaw*, the new front *Genoa-Sulina-Warsaw* opposed to the *Hamburg-Constantinople* line would be seriously fractured.

We have said that a strategical front is a chain of places or rather spaces between which it is possible to manœuvre land, air or sea forces. In the preceding Chapter I have stated that collaboration in the air, that is manœuvre by aeroplanes, is possible between Prague and Paris. This then is a strategic front for air forces. As collaboration by air is not very well possible between Paris and Warsaw one cannot well speak of a strategic front in that case, but only of an alliance between two States whose armed forces must manœuvre independently of one another even if according to a specific joint plan but each relying on its own resources.

The only possible connection between Paris and Warsaw is that on the front Paris-Genoa-Prague-Warsaw. If Prague is eliminated from this front there remains only the strategic front Paris-Genoa-Sulina-Warsaw. This means that by the elimination of Prague (Czechoslovakia) Poland loses her connection with Italy even via Hungary. Italy will be able to link up with Poland only via Yugoslavia and Rumania.

We see that Prague in strategic collaboration with Italy and Poland *defends the triangle of the Central European area of Genoa-Sulina-Warsaw* against the North-west. Given collaboration between Italy and the Balkans, Prague again ensures *a gigantic forefront in the space represented by Genoa-Prague-Sulina.*

Czechoslovakia thus protects to-day the whole middle Danube and the northern flank of Hungary which, after the Anschluss has become a link between Italy and Czechoslovakia.

Hitler's advance into the Danubian basin is similar to the advance made by Charlemagne 1,100 years ago. As soon as Charlemagne had subjugated Bohemia and Moravia he encountered the Avars in the Hungarian Plain. At that time the western portion of Hungary went to form the Pannonian "mark". After the consolidation of the Germanic power in the Danubian basin expeditions began to be undertaken against the Slavs in the north along the valley of the Elbe and against the Poles.

Manœuvre round the Transversal Eurasian Axis, and the British Empire

We have said that the aim of German strategy is control of the transversal Eurasian axis from Hamburg to Basra on the Persian Gulf. Direct advance overland on this axis is prevented by the Black Sea, which may be *passed* either *on the South* via the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, or *on the North* along the South-western slopes of the Caucasus, along a route once used in the opposite direction by Mithriades on his march towards Central Europe. The two routes are on the whole of equal length.

The northern one would seem the more feasible geographically, the southern one more so from the military angle as it is less exposed to flank attacks from Russia. On the South route Germany would come into collision with the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente and Italy, together equal in power to Germany. On the Northern route Poland and Soviet Russia would have to be overcome. Those are forces double that of Germany. The Northern route via Warsaw-Kieff-Tiflis to Basra has, however, the further disadvantage that it is flanked by the Little Entente.

The Little Entente headed by Czechoslovakia which is projected to the crests of the Sudetes and the Carpathians plays the main role in the two German manœuvres in the direction of the transversal Eurasian axis, whether the route be the Northern or the Southern one. In case of the Southern manœuvre (via the Danubian basin) Germany would come into collision *direct* with the Little Entente and its vanguard Czecho-

slovakia. In case of the Northern manœuvre (via the plains of Poland and the Ukraine) Germany would have Czechoslovakia *in her flank* as she would also in case of a descent from the Alpine crests upon Venice.

As long as Czechoslovakia exists, her Bohemian Basin represents a vanguard thrust forward as defence against the North-west. Under its protection the forces destined to defend the approach to the Danubian Basin or designed to check by flank movement a manœuvre to the East through Poland along the northern shore of the Black Sea or to the South over the Alps to the Apennine Peninsula, may freely deploy in the Danubian area.

As soon as Czechoslovakia were overthrown the Danubian basin would become a basis for German offensive in three directions: against Italy, against the Balkans, and against Poland and Soviet Russia. Who will be the most seriously affected by the fact that the Germans advance along the transversal Eurasian axis?

The French will be affected indirectly merely by the fact that Germany becomes more powerful. It would affect them a little only because the transversal Eurasian axis passes through their Syria, from the Black Sea. France would lose her influence in Central and Eastern Europe. She would have to content herself with the role now played by Spain in the face of France. Spain, as regards military power represents about the half of France. Germany, augmented by Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary would be double what France is. If Czechoslovakia should fall, France would find herself politically on the European periphery.

The English, however, would suffer much more by a German occupation of Central Europe. So long as the Germans pushed forward to the East only to the North of the Black Sea the fact would merely be welcome to the English, for the Germans would run up against the Russians, and it is good for England if the Russians have no leisure to turn their attention to Asia, whither they might advance by their railways, their motor roads and their political influence. The English require the Russians to be occupied by some care or other in the West, say with the German army, and in the East with the Japanese army, in order that, in brief, they shall not menace the British army in India. From Tiflis to Basra is a shorter distance than from Constantinople, but from Tiflis no railway runs to Basra. From Constantinople one does. Therefore the danger which threatens from Constantinople is much more serious than that which might threaten from Tiflis. Whoever advances along the old caravan route from Tiflis to Basra will move more slowly than he who chooses the Orient Express line, even though the latter is the longer. The Germans in Kieff would be far less an evil than the Germans in Segedin or in Belgrade.

British dominions are scattered round the Indian Ocean. At the present moment England ensures by sea her connections between the British Isles and her possessions round the Indian Ocean. She has a military predominance in the Atlantic Ocean and in the European seas: the North Sea and the Mediterranean. At sea England is thus not threatened with being cut off from her colonies nor has she to fear that anyone will seize these colonies from the sea.

On land the British colonies on the Indian Ocean were up to 1914 threatened from Germany which dominated the "transversal Eurasian axis" and rapidly strengthened it as a *line of communication* (the Berlin—Bagdad line) and thus also as a *strategic line*.

The advance of Germany along the "transversal axis" was held up by the Great War for some 20 years. *To-day that advance has been resumed.* Great Britain, when it was a matter of danger threatening her dominion over the Indian Ocean by land, endeavoured by political means to develop such a condition of affairs in the frontier regions of her Asiatic and African possessions as made the approach of big military forces to the frontiers of India very difficult. The first means to this end was the creation of *neutral buffer States*, and the second was *the prevention of the construction of railways* to the Indian frontiers and to the Indian Ocean. These political measures were adequate until modern strategy had to take account not only of fleets and land armies but also *air forces*.

The war in Abyssinia showed what it meant to advance with big land forces where communications are lacking. Similar difficulties would face the Russians if they attempted to march over the spurs of the Himalayas and through Afganistan to India where they would run not only against the splendid British fortifications but also against large British forces that have an excellent network of communications behind them.

A different state of affairs, however, would arise in the Near East as soon as anyone permanently secured possession of the area between the five seas—the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Red Sea, the Per-

sian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Such a one would sever Africa from Asia, and Europe from Africa and from Asia.

If whatever happens on the European sector of the "transversal Eurasian axis" is of interest to Europe, whatever happens on the Asiatic sector of the "transversal axis" must, and does, interest the English in particular. Turkey has her railways, but Persia and Afghanistan have not. Turkey is thus always more accessible for great land armies than is Persia or Afghanistan. The great air arm, which has become a new strategic factor, is not tied down to land communications, but depends upon good bases, like a fleet. Air bases are a matter, first and foremost, of fuel and workshops.

Horses represented the "motorisation" of armies of old. The "fuel" for these motors grew on the steppes. The armies of nomadic peoples therefore operated very reluctantly in forest areas where there were no pastures. An excellent basis and supply of "fuel" for Mongolian cavalry armies was the *Hungarian basin* and the South of Russia.

What the Hungarian basin was for the mounted armies of ancient and mediaeval times the naphtha fields of Rumania, of Iraq, of Persia and the Caucasus are to-day for the armies of the air. Much is written about air engines fed on raw naphtha (Diesel engines without magneto-electric ignition. It is contended that Diesel engines are to-day fitted to aeroplanes for fear of some mysterious rays which cause electro-magnetic ignition to fail. But in air engines driven by heavy oil there is vast strategic importance: *aeroplanes with en-*

gines driven by naphtha can be fuelled in excellent fashion and amply at the spots where naphtha is found because the fuel they employ is obtained from crude oil by simple process. There is no need of any complicated refineries such as are necessary for the production of petrol. Rumania, Iraq and Southern Persia are thus the most powerful air bases of European strategy, since for an attacking air force of the twentieth century they are the equivalent of what the South Russian steppes and the Hungarian Plain meant for the invading mounted armies of ancient times and the Middle Ages.

Let us take another look at the "transversal Eurasian axis", which measures 4,000 kilometres from Hamburg to Basra. On it to-day are *the two most powerful air bases of the old world—the naphtha fields of Rumania and Mosul.* The Rumanian oilfield is 1,300 kilometres distant from the great German air bases. The Mosul base is again 1,800 kilometres distant from the Rumanian base. From Mosul it is only about 800 kilometres to the Northern shores of the Persian Gulf (to the end, that is, of the "transversal axis").

Let us imagine now, when wars are won "on waves of naphtha" that one State should dominate these two immense air bases (the Rumanian and the Mosul). What would this mean for England? Nothing either more or less than that she would have to recommence where she left off in 1918, and that the war along the "transversal Eurasian axis" would be resumed in its old brutality.

To none of the countries of Europe can the question of who controls the Rumanian oilfield be of such importance as to England. As long as Czechoslovakia

exists, Germany is over 1,000 kilometres away from the naphtha of Rumania. By the overthrow of Czechoslovakia the Germans would come to within 300 kilometres of that naphtha.

England cannot be indifferent to what takes place on the 'transversal Eurasian axis' in its European sector, or to the question in whose hands the Rumanian naphtha basis may be. Nor can England be indifferent to what happens to Czechoslovakia which guards nearly 500 kilometres of the 'Eurasian axis', and which forms the forepost defending the Rumanian naphtha basis.

If we consider these questions of air strategy in the light of Central European conditions it follows that *England can only rest at ease on the Indian Ocean if the Danubian basin is not dominated by any air Power of front rank.* It is therefore England's interest that the Danubian basin should remain permanently under her influence. Not long ago the German air expert Colonel von Bülow wrote that "England is basing her defence of the Suez Canal on the Alps". From the angle of air strategy this is perfectly correct, and it is equally correct to say that *England must base her defence of the Mosul basin and her communications between Africa and Southern Asia on the Sudetes and the Carpathians. That is what air strategy to-day demands.*

With Czechoslovakia is linked up the fate not only of Italy, Poland, the Balkan Entente and France, but also the future of the British dominion over the Near East.

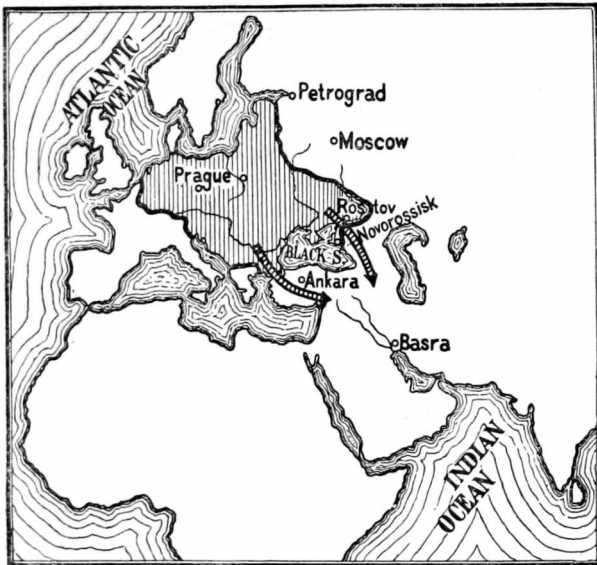
Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia



We have demonstrated what importance the strategic independence of the Southern portion of Central Europe has for Italy, for France, Poland and the British Empire. It remains for us now to examine what strategic rôle the South of Central Europe, with Czechoslovakia as its outpost, can play in cases where the Soviet Union may be involved in war.

We have already referred to the plans for a German invasion of the Ukraine, in which Czechoslovakia and Rumania would be the Southern march route from the Danubian basin as Poland would be for a Northern march route from the Vistula basin. Czechoslovakia in resisting German influence, which *could very easily change from political to strategic* influence, renders service to the security of the Soviet Union in case the Union should have to place the centre of gravity of its forces outside Europe, that is, if it should be compelled to fight on several fronts at once.

The Soviet Union via three buffer States is neighbour to three Great Powers: to Germany via Poland and Lithuania, to England via Afghanistan and Tibet, to Japan via Manchukuo and Northern China. Germany may appear on the scene against Soviet Russia as an ally of England or of Japan. Germany can only appear as the ally of England should Russia threaten England in Southern Asia. Otherwise the best opportunity to cut in would be in the moment when Soviet Russia comes into collision with Japan.

Should the Soviet Union be defeated and Germany really succeed in securing territory by the Black Sea



-  Territories occupied by the Germans in the Great War
 Directions of the German envelopment round the Black Sea

this would mean a considerable advance on Germany's part along the "transversal Eurasian axis" on the Northern shore of the Black Sea. *England has no use for a weak Russia, since a too strong Germany would in truth dominate the "transversal Eurasian axis" on both sides of the Black Sea, which would become a German*

Sea. A weak Russia would mean a too strong Japan in the East, and a too strong Japan means for England the loss of her position in China and perhaps also in the East Indies.

Czechoslovakia and Rumania protect not only the routes to the Danubian basin but also those to the Ukraine. It is therefore comprehensible that Soviet Russia should have an interest in Czechoslovakia's existence, and should lay stress upon friendly relations with the Little Entente. *If the Danubian basin should fall under the influence of Germany those plans of operation would speedily be realized that were drafted prior to 1914 for the combined German, Austrian and Rumanian forces by Generals von Moltke and Conrad.*

What the Germans are really thinking about on the Russian East they demonstrated clearly in 1918. On map 7 we see how far they then penetrated. From Novorosijsk, which they occupied, to Basra is only as far as from Ankara to Basra. *Whoever holds Novorosijsk is also master of the Black Sea, from the Southern shores of which to the Persian Gulf is only as far as from the Caucasus.* Germany on the Black Sea is a greater menace to England than Germany on the Adriatic, where, after all, a Germany thrust may be checked by the joint forces of the English, French and Italians. Once Germany dominates the Danube basin, the Balkans and Asia Minor, an attempted reconquest of the Dardanelles might to-morrow meet with the same failure as in 1915.

Czechoslovakia at the head of the Little Entente represents an outpost of defence of the Danubian basin to prevent it from serving as a German sally-port for

an advance against Soviet Russia, an advance whose aim would be to dominate the whole of the European-Asiatic Black Sea. This explains why the military *defensive* treaty between Soviet Russia and Czechoslovakia represents one of the main pillars of the peace balance in Central and Eastern Europe. If, however, the policy of Soviet Russia were not a *policy of peace, a defensive policy*, a policy of consolidation and of up-building and a *non-imperialistic policy* the Soviet military treaty with Czechoslovakia would lose all its advantages for Russia. If Soviet Russia should attack Poland, she would have the Little Entente in her flank, just as Germany has it in her flank if she should propose to advance against Poland or the Soviet Union.

In brief, Czechoslovakia, as the outpost of the Little Entente, guards from the flank all movements *north* of Central Europe to the East and from the East to Central Europe. She is thus an important wall of defence against any conqueror who should attempt to break in from West to East or vice-versa. *Czechoslovakia is both geographically and strategically* in a defensive position against all movements from the North-west to the South-east (in the direction of the "transversal Eurasian axis"), but on the other hand in respect of flank movements is in a position to attack:

1. against all movements in Northern Europe over the mountain arch of the Alps-Sudetes-Carpathians, and
2. against all movements between the Peninsula of Jutland and Italy.

It is easy to understand, then, why several German belligerent spirits have called Czechoslovakia an ulcer

which has eaten deep into the German body. It is a matter, above all, of a strategic ulcer in the form of a "flank position" to the German line of operations whether latitudinal or longitudinal.

The Little Entente

The Little Entente, composed of three medium-sized States—Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania—has a population of roughly 50 millions and an area of some 700,000 sq. kilometres. It represents a triple-state which *on the European Continent comes immediately after Soviet Russia in size*. After the Little Entente follows France and then present-day Germany. In population the Little Entente is the third largest group in Europe, following Soviet Russia and Germany. After the Little Entente comes England, then France and Italy.

When the Little Entente States concluded an alliance that was designed to ensure quiet conditions in the Danubian area each was in an exposed situation on two fronts. All made a front against Hungary, but in addition to that each abutted on one of the three Powers that for long had endeavoured to attain a position of influence over the Eastern sector of Central Europe which to-day is represented by 12 medium-sized and small States extending from the Baltic to the Adriatic and the mouth of the Black Sea.

Czechoslovakia had Germany as neighbour, Yugoslavia had Italy and Rumania had Russia. This was no agreeable position. Germany made a claim to the portion of Czechoslovakia inhabited by Germans, Italy

to the Dalmatian littoral of Yugoslavia, and Russia systematically included Rumania Bessarabia in her maps. This convergent German-Italo-Russian pressure was, prior to the Hitler era, supported by agreement among those Great Powers in the sphere of foreign policy. The last pressure was that to which Czechoslovakia was subjected by Germany who was obliged to respect the strength of Czechoslovakia's ally, France.

When Germany became on bad terms with Russia this meant a considerable weakening of the pressure upon the Little Entente from the East. Czechoslovakia after concluding a treaty with France negotiated one also with Russia, thus greatly improving the situation of her Danubian ally, Rumania, also. Yugoslavia which finally came to agreement with Italy found the path a little longer to Germany and to Russia. The German of the Reich was much the same to a Yugoslav as a Turk to the Czechoslovak. As long as Austria was independent, Yugoslavia had really the most favourable position of all the Little Entente States. The pressure exerted upon Yugoslavia by its neighbours was much less than that to which Czechoslovakia and Rumania were exposed. Prior to the Anschluss the pressure coefficient on Yugoslavia was 6 and that on the entire Little Entente 7, signifying that in the framework of the Little Entente Yugoslavia was exposed to greater political difficulties than if she pursued an independent policy of her own. The coefficient of pressure on Czechoslovakia was 9 and that on Rumania even 14. The framework of the Little Entente was for these two States an undoubted political gain.

After Anschluss, however, the pressure on Yugoslavia increased considerably, while the pressures on Czechoslovakia and Rumania remained as they had been. Yugoslavia no longer has a pressure coefficient of 6 but of 10.5, which is more than Czechoslovakia's 9. Since the Anschluss the Little Entente borders upon Germany not by merely one of her States but by *two*. Prior to Anschluss Czechoslovakia, and thus also the Little Entente, had 1500 kilometres of common frontier with Germany. To-day that joint frontier has increased by 500 kilometres, 300 in the case of Czechoslovakia and 200 in the case of Yugoslavia.

A common frontier also prescribes a common policy where it is a matter of common interests. The German is no longer a distant individual for Yugoslavia but an immediate neighbour. Common policy does not mean a hostile policy. Joint neighbourhood also means a piece of joint strategy. Two Central European States since Anschluss have been compelled to proceed to a radical readjustment of their plans for national security—Yugoslavia and Hungary. Some slight adjustments have been made in Italy and in Czechoslovakia.

There is considerable talk about the death of the Little Entente, and this leads to the assumption that it will still live on long even if it is sometimes asserted that it is a "locomotive under steam that cannot start". Prior to the breach between Germany and Russia the position of the Little Entente was more difficult than it is to-day. Thanks to Czechoslovakia's treaty with Russia all is now quiet on the Russo-Rumanian front. Yugoslavia's agreement with Italy has secured peaceful conditions on the Adriatic. Czechoslovakia has no dif-

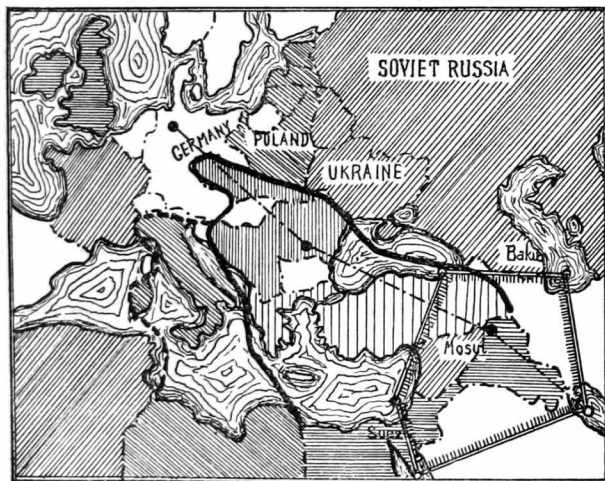
ferences with Italy, and so we can say that the Little Entente has two of its flanks—the Italian and Russian—politically assured. There is now to be considered the continuity of the third and main Great Power of Central Europe—Germany. If we take the Little Entente as a whole it represents no insignificant factor in relation to present-day Germany. Both the wing States of the Little Entente have now as their neighbour on the West a Great Power with a population of 73,000,000, a Power that possesses a huge army, a powerful air force, and which will also have *a decisive voice on the Danube*, where, as I have said, its war fleet already cruises. The Little Entente, however, taken as a whole, is also a Great Power with a population of 50,000,000.

The gate which opens into the Danubian basin and to the Balkans from the North-west has one of its hinges near Fiume and the other near Moravská Ostrava. It represents a wide entrance of roughly 600 kilometres. By the incorporation of Austria in Germany this gate to the Danubian basin has been opened to half its extent—some 300 kilometres. The remainder is guarded to the extent of two-thirds by Czechoslovakia, and to the extent of one-third by Yugoslavia. Nothing can be done to argue away or retouch this fact of military geopolitics.

As is always the case in a system of good management, it is essential to allow for the worse, if we are ultimately to rejoice in the better. It is quite possible that Germany will abandon her specific military pressure on the remainder of the gate to the Danubian basin.

In quarters where respect is paid to strength, the strength of the Little Entente is threefold the strength of each member without the others. This is all the more so to-day now that the Entente has a common frontier with Germany on the West to the extent of 2,000 kilometres. The same thing applies in respect of Hungary, whether that country seeks friendship with the Little Entente or places itself as a German vanguard with its brow eastwards. In each of the three States of the Little Entente half of the population is still alive that remembers that in the Great War there were sent against Serbia and Rumania regiments composed of Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs and Rumanians. To-day it is in the power of these nations to see that nothing of that kind will ever again be repeated. The primary condition is unity, and that is ensured in the Little Entente.

The Little Entente, as the second largest political entity in Europe in respect of area and third in respect of population is undoubtedly also an important strategical factor. If Austria-Hungary with a somewhat larger population but a smaller area, could succeed during the War in sending 80 divisions into the field, the Little Entente in case of war would certainly not fall short of former Austria-Hungary. The Entente is composed of States that from the political point of view are much more consolidated and firmer than was the Habsburg Monarchy, and therefore its strategic potency will be likewise much superior. In peace time the defensive forces of the Little Entente number 60 divisions of infantry and cavalry. They are the largest strategic force in Europe after the armies of Soviet Russia, of Germany and of France.



Little Entente
 Members, with Yugoslavia and
 Rumania, of the Balkan
 Entente
 British Dominions
 French Dominions



Countries of the Rome Pact
 Area between the Five Seas and
 the vestibule to the Indian Ocean
 and India
 ● Metal deposits

One advantage of the Little Entente as a Great Power is that it leans, as it were, on two seas, the Black Sea and the Adriatic. The Black Sea is under the control of Russia, the Adriatic is controlled by Italy. Relations therefore with those two countries have great import-

ance for the Little Entente. We have demonstrated how the aggressive nature of Germany may throw those two Powers into a common front with Czechoslovakia and thus with the Little Entente. *The 60 peace-time divisions of the Little Entente must constrain everyone to serious thought in whose path, either frontal or flank, these divisions stand.*

The Little Entente, well supported on the flanks by Italy and Russia, is to-day master of the Danubian basin, no matter how Germany may arm. On the strategic front of Genoa-Prague-Warsaw, whose second line would be the front of Split-Sulina, there are stationed in peace-time 40 Italian divisions, 60 Little Entente divisions, and about 40 Polish divisions. No force from the North-west could break through this front. It is a front that is absolutely self-sufficing. It has all strategic rawstuffs in abundance even to naphtha.

The strategic centre of gravity of this front is of course Prague, which forms the forefront of the Little Entente, and the main link in the connection between Genoa and Warsaw. *Without the Little Entente it is impossible to defend the route to the Danubian basin and to Constantinople. Just as Czechoslovakia constitutes the outpost of the Danubian guard against the North-west, so Yugoslavia and Rumania form the vanguard of defence of the Balkans against the Danubian basin.* These two States alone cannot defend the Danubian area without Czechoslovakia. Strategically as geographically they belong to the Balkans. Isolated they would, against a thrust from the North, share the fate of the Turks. Only in conjunction with Czechoslovakia

do Yugoslavia and Rumania become serious strategic factors in Central Europe, and an important political component of Europe and the world. Yugoslavia and Rumania would, without Czechoslovakia, be condemned to a passive policy in the Danubian basin.

The Balkan Entente

The Balkan Entente includes two members of the Little Entente—Yugoslavia and Rumania—and also comprises Greece and Turkey. It is a political and strategic Balkan and Mediterranean entity, and a component part of the Near East. It is a combination of States that dominate two-thirds of the shores of the Black Sea, half the seaboard of the Adriatic and two-thirds of the Eastern portion of the Mediterranean, reckoning the Aegean as belonging to that Sea. *Just as the centre of gravity of the Little Entente is in the problems of Central Europe, so does the centre of gravity of the Balkan Entente lie in the problems of the Near East.* The Balkan Entente, as map 8 shows, belongs through Turkey to the “vestibule of the Indian Ocean”, which England must strive at all costs to maintain control of. That is her main vital question.

The Balkan Entente represents approximately a population of 55 millions. Of these, 32 millions pertain to the Little Entente too. The area of the Balkan Entente is 1,300,000 sq. kilometres (of which 450,000 sq. kilometres pertain to the Little Entente). From a military point of view the Balkan Entente represents on the Mediterranean and Black Sea a force of 80 divisions (45

pertaining to the Little Entente). Of that total, 60 divisions are on European soil.

The Little Entente in conjunction with the Balkan Entente represents a political structure that from the strategical angle securely controls the Danubian basin, the Balkans and the Turkish straits. Political activity is given to this structure in Central Europe by Czechoslovakia, and in the Near East by Greece and Turkey.

The Gateway to the East.

The two Ententes together represent a population of roughly 75 millions inhabiting an area of nearly 1,500,000 sq. kilometres, and possessing 95 peace-time divisions.

On the Asiatic continent the two Ententes have a common frontier with two Western Powers—England and France—through Syria and Iraq. Jointly with the Soviet Union they dominate the Black Sea, and in common with England the Eastern portion of the Mediterranean. *If this territorial pentagon between five seas (the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean) constitutes the "vestibule" to the Indian Ocean and to India, the Little Entente represents the main stairway to this vestibule and the Little Entente its garden wall in which Czechoslovakia represents the gate.*

Whoever can break open that gate can reach the stairway, and thence enter the vestibule. The two Ententes dominate the transversal Eurasian axis at its middle sector for nearly two-thirds of its whole length. The North-western portion of roughly 700 kilometres is con-

trolled by Germany, the middle sector of 2,000 kilometres by the two Ententes (the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente), and the South-Eastern sector of 1,000 kilometres by England. The control of the transversal Eurasian axis by the two Ententes, however, is of an *absolutely defensive* character. The nations that form these two Ententes cannot, even if they do number 75 millions entertain any thirst for conquest. Practically they could not share up any conquest among themselves. *The two Ententes therefore represent a powerful static force in present-day Europe, and one of the main pillars of its equilibrium. If at any time the two Ententes give way to pressure along the transversal Eurasian axis there will ensue not merely a transposition of the frontier posts in Europe but a new division of the world.*

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