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CENTRAL UNION OF EUROPE

by PETER JORDAN

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With an Introduction by
ERNEST MINOR PATTERSON, PH. D.
President, The American Academy of
Political and Social Science

This book presents a plan for the federation of the countries of Central Europe from the Mediterranean to the Baltic and lying between Russia and Germany—the eleven small ineffectual nations which for centuries have been the breeding places for war and the happy hunting grounds of aggressors.

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece, all succumbed one by one to the might of Germany. Their joint population was 115 million people; their economic resources were considerable and their combined armies were strong. But they were incapable of a unified economic, political and military action. It is for this reason that Peter Jordan proposes the confederation of these countries to assure them security in the future, and to enable them to collaborate effectively with a larger confederation of the rest of Europe.

How such a Central Union could solve the age-old racial and national problems; how it could encourage healthy commercial, agricultural and industrial development; how it could bring democracy to backward lands; how it could prevent a resurgence of German Nationalism and establish a harmonious relationship with Russia are the subjects which this book discusses. Mr. Jordan's conclusions are lucidly and convincingly stated.

Central Union of Europe must rank with the most illuminating and creative documents dealing with the complex problem of establishing a post-war world which will enjoy the lasting peace for which the United Nations are fighting.

The volume is superbly illustrated with more than twenty-five full-page maps that enable the reader to grasp immediately all the essential facts.

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INTRODUCTION

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*President, The American Academy of Political
and Social Science*

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INTRODUCTION

By ERNEST MINOR PATTERSON, Ph.D.

*President, The American Academy of Political
and Social Science*

READERS of this eloquent plea for "Central Union" will have in mind the various possibilities that may be considered. (1) At the one extreme, there is the idea of self-determination with fifty or sixty or perhaps more countries all retaining as much sovereignty and independence as is possible in an interdependent world. (2) At the other extreme is a world federation ultimately to include all countries, each surrendering a considerable part of its sovereignty. (3) There is the proposal that regional groupings be arranged either with or without each of the groups being dominated by a world organization.

In *Central Union of Europe*, Mr. Jordan advocates the third of these proposals. In doing so, he is in line with the most constructive thinking of the day. He is also a realist in not advocating too strong a federation of the world or even a federation of Europe. No matter what may be true in the distant future, the time has not come when

great nations will formally surrender any large part of their sovereignty to a world government. Nor is it possible to organize a Federation of Europe until there is no longer fear of its dominance by Germany.

An intermediate step is found in the union of existing countries whose geographical location is suitable and which have an aggregate of population and of resources that furnish an adequate combination for strength. Many such groupings have been suggested with many tests applied. To any one of them objections may be advanced. In every case, difficulties abound, but between the certain disasters of the old world disorder and our unpreparedness for a strong world order, the regional organization is the one that seems to be most nearly feasible and at the same time a step forward. If such groupings can be formed, there is still left the question of their relations to each other, if we are not merely to have new and perhaps more terrible rivalries between the various large regions.

Much depends upon the nature of the groupings that may be arranged. The combination suggested by Mr. Jordan has much to commend it. Its present population seems adequate; its area is sufficient; it abounds in natural resources of great variety; and there is a distinct though not extreme diversity in economic development. With the world so interdependent as it is in the twentieth century, Central Union would not and could not be entirely self-sufficient; but complete self-sufficiency is neither feasible nor desirable.

“The establishment of the Central Union will not be an easy task. The obstacles are numerous and some of them appear at the time of writing to be almost unsurmountable, but this should not be a deterrent.” This admission by the author is recorded near the end of the volume and is to be commended. The task is difficult and each day seems to make some of the obstacles more formidable. In a continent so affected by war as is the Europe of today military and political changes are coming almost literally by the hour. In the face of these changes, rigid plans can not be prepared long in advance. The advance of the armies of Russia and the collapse of Germany may result in commitments that will irrevocably alter the position of (say) Eastern Poland and of East Prussia for many years to come. The future of Bessarabia and of Northern Bukovina can not now readily be forecast, but there will apparently still be a Poland and a Roumania and a Czechoslovakia, perhaps with some modifications of borders. No one can at present predict with confidence the future of some of the others, notably that of the Baltic states.

There are at present two groups of countries to be considered. Like the Big Four at the discussions in Paris twenty-five years ago, there are four great Powers today. Not the same group, for France and Italy are missing while in their places are the Soviet Union and China. But now the voices of the smaller nations are being heard. In the interval between the two world wars, their restlessness grew. Though overshadowed by the larger countries their

protests increased and from time to time definitely affected the decisions made. Yet, both within the League of Nations and outside, the impotence of the weak states was evident. Witness the tragedy of Abyssinia in the clash with Italy, the failure to aid China when Manchuria was seized by Japan, the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia in the futile effort to appease Germany and the betrayal of Loyalist Spain. No longer are the governments of the great states disposed to ignore them so fully as in the past. Spokesmen for Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands and the Latin American countries have enough in common, because of their size if for no other reason, to make themselves heard and in many matters they are heeded. At the Food Conference in Hot Springs, at Atlantic City when the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was organized, and in the discussions about a Currency Union and a Bank for Reconstruction and Development their influence has been felt.

For this there are excellent reasons. As Mr. Jordan points out, few if any small countries can maintain a really independent existence! He says, "The era of small countries seems to be over!" This is, however, true in varying degrees of all countries; even large nations are no longer able to ignore their growing dependence on each other. Though the interests of smaller countries frequently clash, they are increasingly conscious of common interests even while they recognize that their future is strongly dependent on the sufferance of the Great Powers. On the other hand,

the larger nations need the smaller ones, if only as a curb upon each other. In addition, there is enough idealism even in international politics to prevent an entirely ruthless attitude to the small and the weak.

Thoughtful readers will not underestimate either present or future difficulties. First, it will be realized that economics and politics are too closely intermingled for either to be discussed without reference to the other. Economic dependence is not merely a matter of nearness as the people of the United States have realized during the past few years. For the sake of its automobile and other industries, the union to which the United States might belong would include the East Indies. Its dependence on tin suggests Malaya and Bolivia, while manganese calls for a union with Brazil and the Soviet Union. No matter what combinations of countries may be brought together because of their proximity to each other, economic dependence will continue. Nothing short of a world union can eliminate it.

Then there is the matter of the balance of power. Before 1914, there was something that went by that name between the Triple Alliance—Germany, Austria, Hungary and Italy; and the Triple Entente—Great Britain, France and Russia. One may properly wonder whether peace would be any better preserved by having five or six combinations or “unions” with interests that are in perpetual conflict.

If such a group of unions is to be a preliminary for a European federation, with or without Great Britain or the Soviet Union, there is still the perplexing question of the

relations between a federation of Europe and the rest of the world. The writers on geo-politics—Mackinder, Haushofer and Spykman—have given us “ample food for thought.” What, for example, would be the position of the United States if such a union were formed? Even if all the American states were loyal members of an American union, rivalries with other parts of the world would continue and clashes would be probable. Again, there seems to be no ultimate safety short of an organization that would include the entire world.

But Mr. Jordan realizes we must start from where we are. In the United States our political leaders, who presumably are aware of the state of public opinion, are careful to avoid any proposals for the sacrifice of sovereignty to a world government. In the field of close political organization, we are driven back to the Jordan thesis. While the area he has chosen for his proposed union bristles with formidable difficulties, the same can be said of other unions to a greater or a less degree. Union will not be easy, but it seems to be the only step that can be taken in the direction we wish to go. Before it can reach the stage of actual formation, changes may be forced by the pressure of events; but the creation and successful operation of such a union would be a gain in itself and a portent of what may be possible elsewhere, say among the Scandinavian countries or in the Western Hemisphere.

If a disagreement with Mr. Jordan were to be recorded, it would be on his failure to develop more fully the rela-

tions between Central Union and the rest of the world. To many students, regionalism by itself is inadequate even as a next step. Some sort of world-wide organization is urged, which will have more strength than the League of Nations and with regional groups or union within the larger framework. But Mr. Jordan is probably wise in his approach. His present purpose is a limited one. In any case, something is imperative to bring together all or at any rate most of the countries he includes in his study. If at the same time Central Union can be made a part of a world organization or league or federation, so much the better. If that proves impossible, a limited union is a vast gain over the past and will lessen if not fully eliminate the strains in the area covered. As a proposal for Eastern Europe and as a method of approaching similar perplexities elsewhere, the idea of Central Union is to be heartily recommended for study. The recent break of relations between Turkey and Germany and the rapid advance of the Soviet Army means that both the Soviet Union and Turkey will powerfully affect any adjustments that are made.

*University of Pennsylvania,
Wharton School of Finance and Commerce,
Philadelphia, Pa.,
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