

THE NEW EASTERN EUROPE

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PREFACE

THE chapters on Poland and Lithuania originally appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, the chapter on Finland in the *Fortnightly Review*, and the chapter on the Ukraine in the *Edinburgh Review*: the writer gratefully acknowledges in all these cases permission to reprint. The three chapters on Poland were written, the first just before the Russian Revolution, the second just before the negotiations at Brest, the third just after the Armistice at the end of 1918. It was originally intended to re-write them from the standpoint of the date of publication. On consideration, however, they have been left as they were written, in the belief that it is no bad way of treating the difficult and complicated Polish question to record its development as it presented itself at three critical stages.

The matter of orthography in the case of a book on Eastern Europe is troublesome. In the case of Russian names the writer has generally followed the practice of Dr. Dillon, whose authority is quite unequalled in England, based as it is not only on an exceptionally intimate experience of Russian politics but on an expert knowledge of Slavonic philology. Little Russian personal names, however (but not place-names), are written in this book in the Ukrainian form: for example, Hrushevsky, not Grushevsky. The case of Polish is more difficult. To transliterate a language using the Latin alphabet, to write, for example, 'Wuj' or 'Woodge' for 'Łódź,' seems in the nature of a linguistic impertinence. On the other hand, it is useless to expect English and American readers to acquire a knowledge of the forty-six Polish letters and double-letters. The average reader ignores all strange-looking diacritical marks,

and pronounces Łódź as 'Lods,' indifferently whether the word is written 'Łódź' or 'Lodz.' The compromise adopted in this book is to omit all diacritical marks in the case of personal and place-names, but to include them in the case of any other Polish words. It is not a very satisfactory compromise. If Poland is once again to play a prominent part in Europe, some orthographic *modus vivendi* will have to be evolved for purposes of West European intercourse. *The New Europe*, whose services to the student of foreign politics during the War it would be difficult to overrate, has made an interesting attempt to solve the problem by writing all Slavonic names in Croat. It is, however, a solution which the other Slavonic nations can hardly be expected to appreciate. To some it will seem almost to savour of monomania.

Bibliographical references are apt to be tiresome in a book of essays of this kind: but a certain number of references to French and German books published since the War, and to one or two notable books of earlier date, have been included. It is hoped these will be of service to some students.

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INTRODUCTION

THE new borderland of nations, which has come into existence between Russia and Central Europe, constitutes a political group for which it is convenient to use the collective expression 'Eastern Europe.' It is with this group of nations that the present volume is concerned. Russia forms the background to them all. But Russia is not here treated separately; for on Russia there is available in English an extensive and excellent literature, and the events of the War period in Russia, at any rate since the Revolution, have been fully reported in the Press. On the East European nations, on the other hand, very little has been reported in the Press, and the literature available in English is peculiarly scant. Before the War there was perhaps no region in Europe of which so little was known in England. The Balkans, the Islamic lands, the Far East, were all better known. There was a certain interest in Finland; for the constitutional dispute between Finland and Russia had attracted attention. There were some works on Polish history and politics; but the best of them, an Essay by the late Lord Salisbury, was half a century old.¹ On the Ukranian Question a

¹ By far the best introduction in English to contemporary Polish questions is Mr. Geoffrey Drage's *Pre-War Statistics of Poland and Lithuania* in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. lxxxii. pt. ii. (March 1918). An English translation of *Petite Encyclopédie Polonaise* (Lausanne, 1916), one of the principal authorities used by Mr. Drage for the above paper, appeared at the beginning of 1919 (*Pol. na, Her People, History, Industries, &c.*, London, 1919—the date on the title-page is wrongly printed 1909).

Prof. Alison Phillips in his volume on Poland (London, 1915) has an interesting chapter on the Ukranian Movement, written from a different point of view from that taken up in this volume.

couple of pamphlets had appeared before the War. On Lithuania and the three races of the Baltic Provinces there were no sources of information in English at all. That the Foreign Office possessed a store of esoteric intelligence on all these countries does not appear probable from a consideration of the policy which it has pursued. Ministers have had to pioneer *in terra incognita*, without any of that preliminary clearing of the ground which is afforded by public discussion in books and newspapers.

The object of this book, appearing at an hour when the diplomats of all the belligerents are assembling to redraw the map of Europe, is not to discuss policy, still less to attack or defend the policy of this or that Government, but to give a conspectus of the material on which any discussion of policy must be based. It takes in turn each of the five regions, Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, Poland, and the Ukraine, and endeavours to bring into relief the factors which in each compose the situation. Two main factors dominate the situation in all these countries. The first is Nationalism, a political movement drawing its inspiration from ideas, which were more current in the last century than this, but are by no means yet exhausted. The second is Socialism, an economic movement, in its East European development a movement of the twentieth century, first awakening to consciousness in the Russian Revolution of 1905. The interaction of these two movements during the twelve years between the first Russian Revolution in 1905 and the second in 1917 constitutes the principal theme of this book. Sometimes, as in Finland, the two are in open conflict. Sometimes, as in Poland, the political dominates the economic movement. Sometimes, as in the Ukraine, the economic movement dominates the political. But more often the two are found working in combination under the influence of a common hostility to Russia. After the second revolution the tendency is to conflict; and in this conflict Socialism labours under one great disadvantage. Its literature and tradition are industrial; and the conditions, to which it has to

be applied in Eastern Europe, are agricultural. In most of the East European countries—Finland is an exception—the Socialists have no thought-out agrarian policy. When the question of the land is raised, they either take refuge in rhetoric, or they adopt *en plein* the agrarian programme of the Russian Revolutionaries. But the conditions in Russia and in Eastern Europe are not identical. The Agrarian Revolution in Russia has been based on the principle of communal ownership, which is in harmony with the profoundly Socialistic Russian temperament, and in the working of which the Russian peasants have had long experience in the village communes. But the Russian commune is not an East European institution. To the Finnish, or Lettish, or Polish peasant, even to the Ukrainian peasant, it makes scant appeal. The attempt to apply it to East European social conditions at once rallies to the side of Reaction every class or individual which owns any property at all. This development has been most conspicuous in the case of the Ukraine, and is discussed at length in the chapter devoted to the Ukrainian Movement. The influence of the mighty Agrarian Revolution in Russia is already felt in a hundred ways, and will in future, no doubt, be felt increasingly. But for the present property in Eastern Europe seems still too fundamental an institution easily to be disturbed.

A new Balkans has been created in Eastern Europe ; and no diplomatic reversal of the Treaty of Brest can reverse the facts of the situation. The Ukraine may join with Russia again, for Little Russia is one of All the Russias after all. But the non-Russian, non-Orthodox races of the Borderland, Finns, Balts, Letts, Esths, Lithuanians, Poles, are now launched for good or bad on an independent career. Hitherto they have been held in artificial equilibrium by the presence of the German armies. Now these are being withdrawn, and there is beginning to ensue, as in the Balkans when the Turkish power was removed, a jostling of infant nationalities struggling to find their feet. The young Balkan States could look to powerful neighbours,

Austria on the one hand and Russia on the other, for support; and the rest of Europe could preserve the peace of the Balkans, *tant bien que mal*, by balancing the rival influences of these two Powers. But the two great neighbours of the new Eastern Europe are both in collapse: and the friction between the several States has a free field. Force, in the shape of international Armies of Occupation, can no doubt hold it in suspense, as the Austro-German Occupation held it in suspense. But a mistake will be made if it is supposed that it can be dissipated by force—still less by diplomatic machinery. Friction in the case of young Nationalisms in conflict is a process of biological growth.

Much will depend on the stability which the new States are able to develop for themselves in the first decade of their existence. Political stability in Eastern Europe is mainly dependent on agrarian conditions. The analogy with the Balkans is again illuminating. It will be long before unhappy Roumania recovers from her present disasters, because her internal weakness arises out of the concentration of the land in the hands of her governing oligarchy. Bulgaria survived the scarcely less crushing disasters of 1913 with an elasticity which surprised the world, because the Bulgarian State has the stability of its land-owning peasantry. Even in Western Europe not a few historians have ascribed the recovery of France after 1870 to the stabilising influence of the French peasantry. For the economic structure of an agricultural country no better base has yet been discovered than a peasantry in possession of the land. The attempt is made in this book to show in some relief the elements in each country, out of which such a peasantry can be formed. It must be admitted on a general conspectus that they do not at present bulk largely in the view. The initial conditions in the new Eastern Europe are less favourable in this respect than they were in the Balkan States after the abolition of Turkish rule. There is less to build on, and more to be done.

The most uncertain factor of the future is Poland. Ten years of anarchy at the outset in Poland would lead, not only to a Fourth Partition, or some similar measure such as International Control, in Poland itself, but in all probability to the collapse of the other States as well. The Poles are a baffling race. In all Europe there is no people, with the possible exception of the French, which is naturally so gifted. No one can study Eastern Europe without feeling that they are infinitely the most attractive of the peoples with which he has to do. They are the only one in whose composition there is included that subtle *differentia* which marks off the 'big' nation from the 'small.' Their culture is not borrowed: it is original and creative, the true expression of their national genius and their historic tradition. Yet in the political sphere their genius is strangely unfruitful. They are of those artists who produce nothing. Their conceptions are brilliant, but they have no technique, and do not see the need of it: and they never finish their work. Their political capacity is, as it were, negative. Their resistance to outside pressure is amazing; but they seem unable to develop their own strength. Lack of positive qualities, of discipline on the one hand and of moderation on the other, brought them to their fate in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century their negative qualities found their scope: and they may fairly claim that by a hundred years of successful resistance alike to Russian and to Teuton penetration they have proved to the world that they can be neither absorbed nor crushed. To-day their captivity is over, and they are free to rebuild their fallen State. Yet they are rent by internecine quarrels: all their old imperialism has revived: and instead of betaking themselves to trowel and mortar, and with prayer and fasting each man labouring night and day at the foundations, they sit disputing amid the ruins whether they shall ally themselves with Babylon or the Mede, while their trumpeters and shawm-players march in procession to all the cities of Philistia to

proclaim, when their greatness is re-established, how great that greatness will be. Here, for example, is the matured utterance in the summer of 1918 of a Society founded by, and in close touch with, the then Polish Prime Minister¹ :—

The Allies, when they declare that a Poland united, strong and independent, both politically and economically (with access to the sea), is an indispensable requisite for a stable peace, admit what appears to be a self-evident truth. That truth is simply this, that Russia has for many years ceased to exist as a real power, and in order to secure the European equilibrium it is necessary to replace her by a new factor, that is, by Poland. Poland appears perfectly designed to group around her all the Slavonic peoples, united amongst themselves by bonds of amity and by more or less close alliance. Here we are face to face with a really sound idea which, as we are glad to see, has entered into the War calculations of the Entente as a positive value.

Megalomania so childish, so pitifully out of all relation to the world of actualities, induces a sinking in the breast of every friend of Poland. And yet, when the student is tempted to think all Poles are like this, he must never lose sight of what the Poles have accomplished in Poznania by slow methodic toil, with iron discipline, and with a self-abnegation which makes the heart ache to see it. The prospect in Poland looks brightest when seen from this quarter, and the writer has endeavoured to give it full prominence in the following pages. It would be absurd to say that all the problems of Warsaw find their solution in Posen. Nevertheless, in the writer's opinion, the future in Poland in the next ten years depends very largely on whether Warsaw is prepared to seek in Posen its inspiration.

¹ The Society is *La Pologne et la Guerre* of Lausanne; and the Manifesto, from which this passage is quoted, was published in *The New Europe*, August 15, 1918. *The New Europe* in publishing it expressed the opinion that 'it may be accepted as embodying the views of the great majority of Poles in their own country, though for very obvious reasons it could not be publicly endorsed by the Government of Warsaw under military occupation.'

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