

## C O N T E N T S.

### Plebs Textbooks Series.

1. An Outline of Economic Geography. (No.4.)  
1926. pp.1-77.
2. An Outline of European History from the  
Decay of Feudalism to the Present Day.  
(No.5.) 1925. pp.79-155.

-----  
Third Merttens Lectures on War & Peace.

3. Danger Zones of Europe: A Study of National  
Minorities. By John S. Stephens. 1929.  
pp.158-199.
4. Justice Among Nations. By Horace G.  
Alexander. 1927. pp.201-229.  
-----
5. The Unifying of Civilization. (The League of  
Nations.) By G. Davies Watkins. 1929.  
pp.231-317.
6. Things that Count in Diet. By H. Valentine  
Knaggs. pp.321-350.
- 6a The Ethics of Widow-Marriage. By S. V.  
Malebenmur. 1928. pp.351-362.
7. A Woman of India. Being the life of Saroj  
Nalini. By G. S. Dutt. 1929. pp.365-433.

AN OUTLINE  
OF  
ECONOMIC  
GEOGRAPHY

AN OUTLINE  
OF  
ECONOMIC  
GEOGRAPHY

PLEBS  
TEXTBOOKS  
NUMBER  
FOUR

PUBLISHED BY THE PLEBS LEAGUE  
162A BUCKINGHAM PALACE RD., LONDON, S.W.1  
for the use of the classes conducted under the  
auspices of the National Council of Labour Colleges

FIRST PUBLISHED, NOVEMBER, 1928.

SECOND EDITION, NOVEMBER, 1924

REPRINTED (with corrections) JANUARY, 1926

#### NOTE

*This textbook, like the other volumes in the same series, has been first drafted by one hand, and then discussed and revised by an Editorial Committee.*

*The author of the original draft of this book is J. F. HERRIN, who has also drawn the maps illustrating it. His arrangement of the material and general method of presentation has been adhered to throughout; but numerous suggestions, corrections, and additions by other members of the Committee have been embodied in the book.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dhananjayrao Gadgil Library

	PAGE
NOTES FOR STUDENTS AND T	7
PREFACE . . . . .	9
CHAP. I.—GEOGRAPHICAL FACTS	
Man and His Environment—Geography and History—	
Egypt and the Desert—America and the Two Oceans	
—Britain's Geographical Position . . . . .	11
CHAPT. II to V.—WORLD HISTORY: THE GROWTH	
TOWARDS ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE	
CHAP. II.—THE RIVER VALLEYS	
Tropical and Temperate Zones—Conditions	
Favourable to Human Development—Where	
Civilisation Began—Social Effects of Irrigation—	
The River as a Unifying Factor . . . . .	21
CHAP. III.—INLAND SEAS	
The "Mediterranean Chapter"—Civilisation	
Spreads—Iron Supplants Bronze—The Medi-	
terranean Area Unified—The Outer Peoples	
Break In—A Second "Inland Sea" Area . . . . .	30
CHAP. IV.—THE OCEAN	
The First Steps towards World Unification—The	
Way to the Indies—The Westward Route and a	
"New World"—Shifting the Centre—The	
Beginning of British Supremacy—Opening-Up	
the World's Coasts . . . . .	44
CHAP. V.—LAND TRANSPORT	
The Coming of the Railway—Opening-Up the	
Great Land Masses—(i) Africa; (ii) America;	
(iii) Asia—Railways and European States . . . . .	55
CHAP. VI.—THE WORLD TO-DAY	
World Economic Interdependence—Political Divisions—	
The Grouping of States—The Five Great Groups . . . . .	65
CHAPS. VII to XI.—THE FIVE GREAT GROUPS	
CHAP. VII.—AMERICA	
The New Power—The Development of the United	
States—Resources of the United States—Central	
and South America—The Panama Canal—Canada	74
CHAP. VIII.—THE BRITISH EMPIRE	
Geographical Dis-unity—Sea Power and Sea	
Routes—Industrial Britain and the Dominions—	
The Indian Ocean and the Sea Road Thither—	
Zones of Friction—Resources, and Relative	
Decline of Great Britain . . . . .	85

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPS. VII to XI.—THE FIVE GREAT GROUPS—*cont.*

	PAGE
<b>CHAP. IX.—THE FAR EAST</b>	
The Civilisation of China—Unexploited Resources —Japan—The Pacific Problem—Who is to Exploit China ? . . . . .	96
<b>CHAP. X.—RUSSIA</b>	
The Workers' Group—Geographical Factors in Russian History—Railways Begin the Modern Chapter—The Revolution—Russia's Problem To-day—Resources and Possibilities . . . . .	105
<b>CHAP. XI.—THE FRENCH EMPIRE</b>	
Prussia's Successor—The One Thing Lacking— Post-War Europe—The Mediterranean Link— Franco-British Rivalry—Italy . . . . .	115
 <b>CHAP. XII.—CONCLUSIONS</b>	
World Unity <i>versus</i> Imperialism — The Task of the Workers — World Capitalism the Enemy — Inter- nationalism must be based on Knowledge . . . . .	124
<b>APPENDIX</b> . . . . .	129
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> . . . . .	135
<b>LIST OF MAPS</b> . . . . .	137
<b>INDEX</b> . . . . .	189

## NOTES FOR STUDENTS AND TUTORS

**T**HE maps illustrating this book are not intended to take the place of an Atlas, but should be used as supplementary thereto. We recommend, as being both cheap and well produced, Philips' "Elementary Atlas of Comparative Geography" (2s., post-paid 2s. 4d.).

The twelve chapters of this book will form a Syllabus for a course of twelve lectures.

For a shorter course of six lectures, the later chapters dealing with the world of to-day will probably be chosen as the basis. Some such arrangement as the following can be adopted:—

LECTURE 1.—*The World of To-day*. Economic Interdependence (very brief summary of Chapters II-V). The Five Great Groups.

LECTURE 2.—*America*. The Two Oceans, and the Key Route Between. Coal, iron, and oil.

LECTURE 3.—*The British Empire*. Geographical Dis-Unity. Sea-power and Sea-routes, &c.

LECTURE 4.—*The Far East*. The Riches of China. The Rise of Japan. The Pacific Problem.

LECTURE 5.—*Russia*. Land Transport. The Wealth of Siberia. Geography and Revolution.

LECTURE 6.—*The French Empire*. Imperialism in Europe. France takes Germany's Place. The Control of the Mediterranean. Conclusions.

It will of course be realised by every intelligent student that any study of present-day world-problems needs to be constantly revised and kept up to date in the light of *current events*. Tutors, wherever possible, will take care to use contemporary happenings in international affairs as supplementary illustrations. This book aims at providing a broad outline, into which the details have to be filled.

For a short course on Geography and History—which, as experience has proved, is exceedingly useful as a means of interesting new students in both subjects—Chapters I to VI will form the syllabus. Tutors, of course, should take care to introduce into these historical lectures frequent references to current problems and to the world of to-day in order to emphasise the connection between past and present history.

## P R E F A C E



IT is obvious that one small book cannot cover that vast mass of facts and statistics which forms the material of the study of geography. To do that would require an encyclopedia; and even if worker-students had leisure to assimilate encyclopedias, there would be no need for the Plebs League to attempt one on this particular subject, since many excellent geographical books of reference are available. "Pure" geography, *i.e.*, the mass of geographical facts, is not one of the subjects open to rival class interpretations. The depth of the Atlantic, the number of the tributaries of the Amazon, or the average rainfall in equatorial Africa, all these are definitely ascertainable (if not already ascertained) and are the same for capitalist and proletarian. So far, therefore, as the proletarian student requires—and of course he will require—a groundwork of "pure" geographical knowledge, he will make use of the books produced by bourgeois authors and capitalist publishers; and especially of that best of all compendiums of geographical knowledge—a good atlas.<sup>1</sup>

This book has a different aim. It is not primarily concerned with "pure" geography, but with geography studied in relation to history and economics, two subjects of vital importance to the workers. It does not claim for the study of geography a special or peculiar importance; on the other hand, it treats geography as subsidiary to the study of human history, past and present. Only in so far as knowledge of geographical facts and factors helps towards a better understanding of the course of social development and—especially—of the problems of our own day, does geography concern the proletarian student. (Though he, of course, as much as other people, is entitled to his share of recreation; and may, if his bent is that way, get as much pleasure out of maps as others get out of the movies.)

The vital international problems of to-day are, by the very nature of Imperialism—the latest phase of Capitalism—

---

<sup>1</sup> See Notes for Students and Tutors.

## PREFACE

to a large extent geographical problems. Modern monopolist-capitalism aims at the economic exploitation of all the territories of the world; at the control of all the raw materials therein (including human labour-power), and of the sea and land routes necessary for the transportation of materials, first, to the industrial centres and, second, to their ultimate markets. Quite apart, therefore, from an understanding of the nature of this monopolist-capitalism—which is the subject-matter of economics—we need, if we are to study it in actual operation, to know as much as possible of the geographical facts and factors which condition, and in their own way dictate, its workings.

Further, those very problems of world production and distribution which Imperialism has made acute are the problems which it will be the task of the world's workers to solve. The working class has to face the job of organising world resources for the use of the peoples of the world, instead of for the profit of a few. And that, in its ultimate stages at all events, is a problem in economic geography.

In all this we are a long way removed from the "pure" geography in which rival class interests and interpretations played no part. Hence this book: which, from the great mass of geographical material, selects certain facts of greater significance than others *from the working-class point of view*, with the specific object of helping to make that point of view more fully *conscious* and informed.