

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	GIPE-PUNE-019054	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
CHAP. IX.—THE FAR EAST	
The Civilisation of China—Unexploited Resources —Japan—The Pacific Problem—Who is to Exploit China ?	96
CHAP. X.—RUSSIA	
The Workers' Group—Geographical Factors in Russian History—Railways Begin the Modern Chapter—The Revolution—Russia's Problem To-day—Resources and Possibilities	105
CHAP. XI.—THE FRENCH EMPIRE	
Prussia's Successor—The One Thing Lacking— Post-War Europe—The Mediterranean Link— Franco-British Rivalry—Italy	115
 CHAP. XII.—CONCLUSIONS	
World Unity <i>versus</i> Imperialism — The Task of the Workers — World Capitalism the Enemy — Inter- nationalism must be based on Knowledge	124
APPENDIX	129
BIBLIOGRAPHY	135
LIST OF MAPS	137
INDEX	189

NOTES FOR STUDENTS AND TUTORS

THE 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.¹

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—

¹ 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.

AN OUTLINE OF ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I

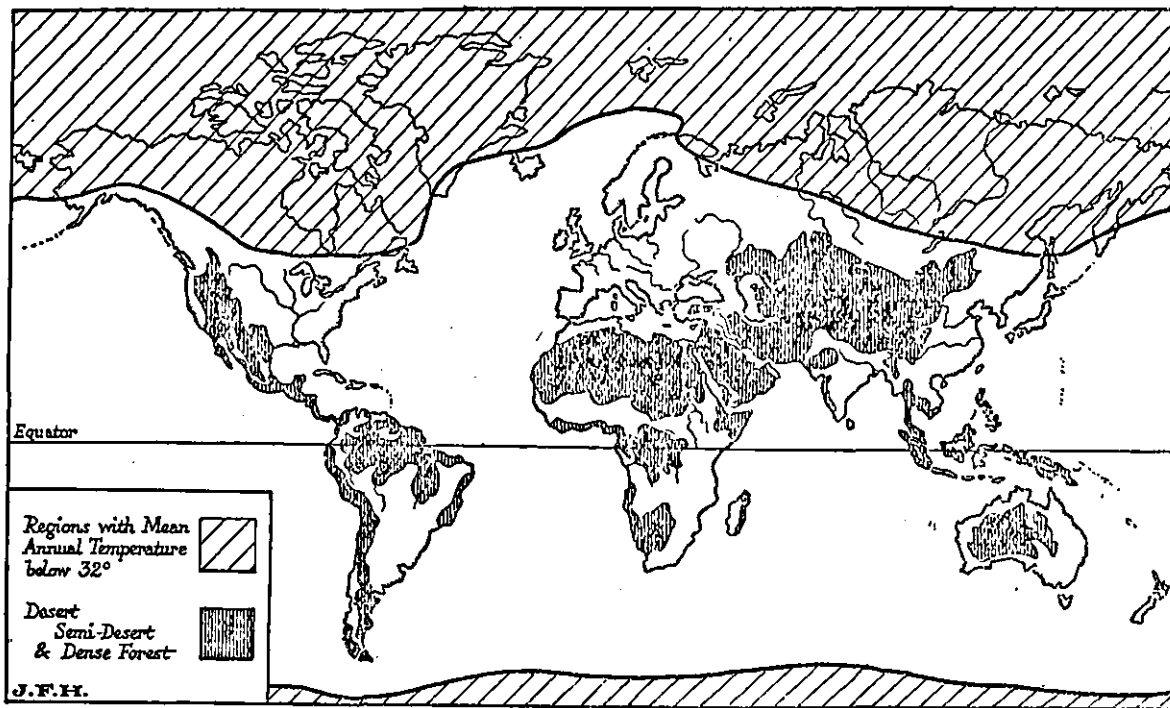
GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS IN HISTORY

MAN is a product of the earth's surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust; but that the earth has mothered him, fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his wits, given him his problems of navigation or irrigation, and at the same time whispered hints for their solution . . . Man can no more be scientifically studied apart from the ground which he tills, or the lands over which he travels, or the seas over which he trades, than polar bear or desert cactus can be understood apart from its habitat. Man's relations to his environment are infinitely more numerous and complex than those of the most highly organised plant or animal."

So writes one of the most brilliant modern students of Geographical Environment in the opening chapter of her great book on the subject.¹ Our purpose in **Man and His Environment** this *Outline* is to study a few actual examples of the way in which the earth has "mothered" man, "fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties . . . given him problems." That is to say, we are concerned with geography, not simply as a description of the surface of the earth, but of the earth *as the home of man*. "Man is a product of the earth's surface." And he lives only on condition that he adapts himself to that surface and its materials to himself.

The very first fact that emerges from a study of a "physical" map of the world (*i.e.*, one concerned with the representation of *natural*, as distinct from *political*, divisions) is that only in certain areas of the earth's surface can man

¹ Ellen C. Semple, "Influences of Geographic Environment," pp. 1-2.



MAP 1.—The World, showing regions where men either cannot live at all, or can live only under very difficult conditions.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

live at all, while in other areas only a very limited and primitive kind of life is possible (cf. Map 1). At the two poles are vast frozen areas whose intense cold destroys alike the life of men and the things required for their food. Midway between the poles are areas where excessive heat and rainfall result in such luxuriance of tangled vegetation that passage through it is scarcely possible except by the "monkey route"—by the tree-tops. Elsewhere are vast deserts made uninhabitable either from lack of rain-water and consequently of vegetation, or from great elevation and bitter winds. Varying distributions of heat and moisture—dependent on nearness to or distance from the equator, on winds, ocean-currents, altitudes, and other fundamental considerations—thus make some parts of the earth's surface infinitely more desirable, from man's point of view, than others. And that fact remains true to-day, even though man's increasing control over natural conditions, the result of his steady progress in tool-making and tool-using, has made the difference between the naturally favoured and unfavoured regions *relatively* less. We are all of us too apt to accept the ordinary day-to-day conditions of our lives, whether geographical or social, as "normal" to human beings, *everywhere* and *everywhen*. Geography and history both help us to view the world in better perspective.

Also, geography and history each enable us to understand the other better. It is fairly obvious that an understanding of history is impossible without some Geography knowledge of geography and the geographical and factors which have played a "passive" part History in history—by providing the problems which man had to solve. It is equally true that one can only study geography intelligently (geography, that is, as related to the life of man) by studying it *historically*. We shall not, in fact, merely study the surface of the earth "as the home of man"—in the abstract; but as the home of *men*—at particular stages of development. In a sense, and considered apart by themselves, geographical factors may be said to be unchanged and unchanging. At any rate for far more than the period of any sort of human history the main facts of geography—distribution of land and water climate, &c.—have remained, broadly, the same.

AN OUTLINE OF

But—and this is a fundamentally important fact to grasp at the very beginning of our study—they are constantly changing in their effects and their importance, considered in their relation to the social and economic development of mankind. And this, observe, is precisely the relation in which we are studying them.

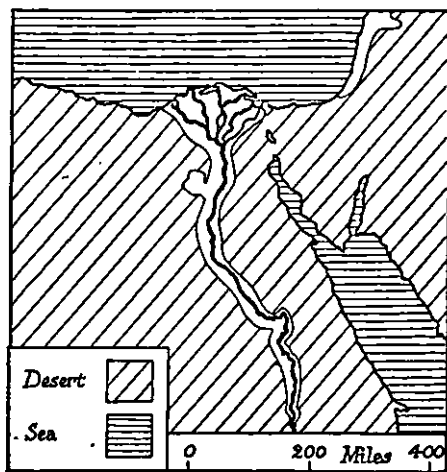
This means that we must beware of making any absolute statements about the influence of this or that geographical factor. We are studying the interplay of two things: on the one hand, man's slowly developing control over his environment; on the other, that environment itself, ever setting him new tasks to undertake, new problems to solve. And as he conquers this or that feature of his environment, what was an obstacle becomes a stepping-stone—what had been a thing to fight against is now an ally in the struggle against new obstacles. We shall devote the rest of this chapter to glancing at two or three geographical factors operating at different periods of history, with the object of illustrating what we mean by a geographical factor and its effect, and of showing how the same factor, at earlier and later stages of human development, has been first a disadvantage and later an advantage, or *vice versa*.

Let us take as our first example the *desert*. Broadly speaking, the desert, until (if that be possible) it be altogether conquered by man-planned and man-made irrigation, is definitely an obstacle in man's path. He cannot live in it—at any rate, not in any great numbers or only at the expenditure of an enormous amount of effort. He cannot even journey across it except at greater cost than over even moderately watered and fertile country. It is, since the ocean was conquered, the greatest *barrier* to full and free communication between peoples.

But at a certain stage of human development a *barrier* to communication was an advantage, not an obstacle, to further development. In the very beginnings of civilisation, *i.e.*, of settled life in a particular area, natural barriers, formidable enough to keep at a distance wandering tribes of men still in a lower stage of development, were the one great essential of progress within that area. The sea, until men learned to navigate it, was such a barrier. Mountain

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

and swamps have been and are such barriers. But there never was a barrier more formidable than the desert. (The desert of Sinai in which, according to Hebrew legend, the Chosen People wandered for forty years after their flight from Egypt was still a tough obstacle during the great war to twentieth-century armies.) In its first feeble beginnings, civilisation developed most rapidly, being less subject from interruption from outside, in an area protected by deserts on three sides out of four.



MAP 2.—The Nile Valley.

The valley of the Nile, the seat of one of the very earliest if not of the earliest of all civilisations, was in effect a long narrow island, cut off by natural barriers from the rest of the world. On the north was the sea, in those earliest days an absolute barrier; and east, west, and south was the desert. The "island" was the strip of fertile river valley. And in that island, based on schemes of irrigation in which more and more men co-operated, a *settled*, as distinct from a *nomad*, life grew up and developed. No other land anywhere on the earth had such a degree of *natural protection*, combined with those other factors of climate and soil, which was particularly favourable to this "cradle" stage. At this

AN OUTLINE OF

stage, then, when absence of communication with the outer world was advantageous, the desert was a favourable geographical factor.

But absence, or difficulty, of communication with the outer world is only advantageous at this early stage. So soon as the problems set by a particular environment have been faced and overcome, then further progress is only made through contact with other peoples and other sets of problems. The Nile valley was a *cradle* of civilisation. But in other valleys civilisation was carried to a further stage. Once the inhabitants of the Nile valley had solved their own peculiar problems—conquered their own environment—then their isolation from other peoples, the result of their desert frontiers, was a disadvantage. And the consequence was a stagnation, a stereotyping of all forms of life—law, literature, religion, customs—only approached on the same scale anywhere or anywhen else in history (and then for much the same reasons) by China. At this later stage the desert was a decidedly unfavourable geographical factor.

Let us take the position of a particular land area in relation to the *ocean* as our second example.

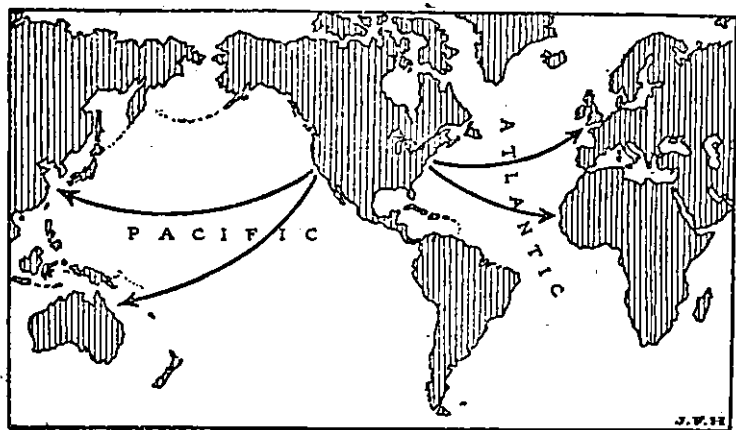
How was it that when, at the end of the fifteenth century, Europeans discovered the “new world” of America, they found only in one or two limited areas any sort of civilisation at all, and that civilisation at a comparatively primitive stage, roughly parallel to what had been outgrown in parts of the Old World five thousand years earlier?

Various kinds of facts and factors bound up with the geography of America itself had, of course, played an important part in determining the precise stage of development reached in the continent. But one big obvious fact had been of fundamental importance in deciding that man's progress in America was perforce made unaided and unstimulated by any contact with men elsewhere—the fact that on either side an ocean separated it from the land mass of the Old World. And for thousands of years after the men of the Old World had learned to navigate rivers and inland seas, the ocean remained a barrier. Behind her ocean barriers America slumbered on—or, to be more precise, moved at an infinitely slower pace. The ocean, so long as it was

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

barrier, was a disadvantageous geographical factor, precisely as, after that earlier period when protection was of paramount importance, the desert was a disadvantageous factor in the case of Egypt.

But what of America's position in relation to the two great oceans, Atlantic and Pacific, to-day? Four centuries have elapsed since Columbus sailed; centuries during which man has made himself more and more the master of the ocean, and has changed it from a barrier to a *link* between distant



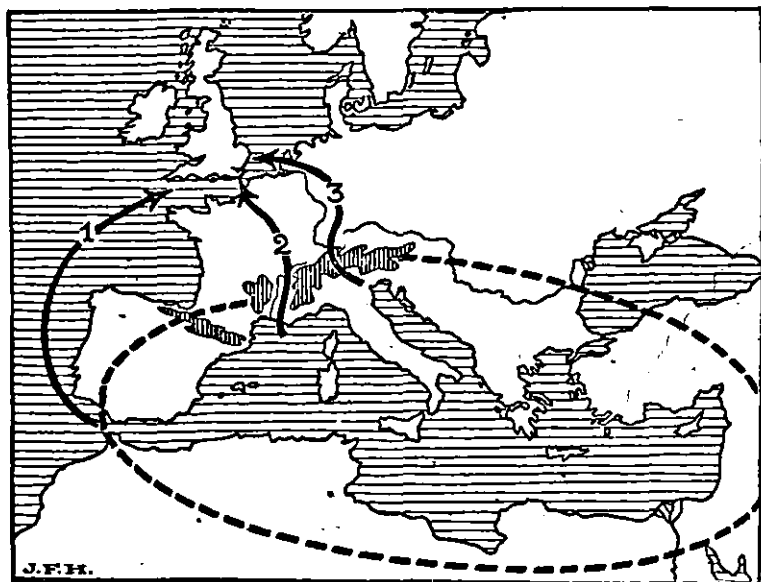
MAP 3.—America's mid-ocean situation.

lands; centuries during which also the civilisation taken to America from the Old World has taken root and developed at amazing speed, until to-day the United States of America stands in the very forefront of capitalist-industrial powers. America's position, with one coast fronting the Atlantic and Europe, and the other the Pacific and the Far East of Asia, gives her now a peculiar advantage as compared with the European industrial centres. She is placed midway between the two sides of the Old World, with ocean routes leading from her ports east and west. Now that the ocean is no longer a barrier it is a geographical factor favourable to America.

AN OUTLINE OF

Let us, if only for the sake of referring to our own island,¹ quote as our last illustration Britain and Britain's geographical position off the north-west coast of Europe. Most of us have since our school days been familiar with the idea that Britain's greatness in the world of nation-states was in some way due, at least in part, to this particularly favourable situation. Yet the island now called Britain has occupied precisely the same geographical position for thousands of years; whereas, it is only during the last three centuries or so that the ruling class of that island has attained increasing power and prestige in the world at large.

Geographical position, as we have seen in the cases of Egypt and America, is favourable or unfavourable *only in*



MAP 4.—Britain in relation to the Mediterranean world. The arrows show (1) the sea way, by which the Phoenicians reached North-West Europe; (2) the route through the "Rhone gap," by which the Romans came; and (3) the Rhine valley route, the great land trade route of the Middle Ages.

¹ *I.e.*, the island on which we and our fellows are exploited; called "our" island by a figure of speech.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

relation to something else. That "something else" is the particular degree of technical or economic development reached by the people of a particular area, or by the peoples of regions bordering that area. For thousands of years history centred around the Mediterranean Sea—that is, when the lands surrounding that sea were making the greatest advances socially, technically, and economically. So long as this was the case, so long was Britain's situation relatively a disadvantage to her inhabitants. On the outer edge of the world of trade and commerce, far removed from main routes and main centres, she had not, until first the Phœnicians and then the Romans came, any place at all in the "world picture." And when the Roman power waned Britain, for another thousand years, was again "at the back of beyond." Then, as trade spread northward up the Rhine valley from the Mediterranean cities, and the merchants of the Hansa League made of North Sea and Baltic a second "inland sea area," Britain, though still on the outer edge, was brought into closer contact with the world. She formed the north-western terminus of the great trade routes crossing the continent from the Mediterranean: but a *terminus*, note—not a *base* on her own account. Finally, there came the "opening-up" of the Atlantic and the discovery of the new world west of the ocean; and at last the countries of north-western Europe, the lands with an Atlantic instead of a Mediterranean coastline, found themselves in the most desirable position of all—fronting the routes to the shores of the new continent.

Then, and only then, did Britain's position tell to her advantage; and from that time we date the beginnings of British dominance in European and ultimately in world affairs. Hitherto, she had been in a back lane; now she found herself, so to speak, occupying the finest site on Main Street.¹

Having now seen what we mean by "geographical factors" in history, and having realised the need, if we wish to gain an accurate idea of the significance of these factors, of studying them *in relation to* the dynamic of history

¹ To-day, of course, with the opening of the new routes—by land, since the coming of railways, and across another ocean, the Pacific—the advantages of that position are becoming *relatively* less. (See later chapters.)

AN OUTLINE OF

—man's steadily developing technical skill—we can proceed to a brief outline of world history, in which we shall consider certain great technical advances made by man along with the geographical factors with which they were peculiarly linked

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER II

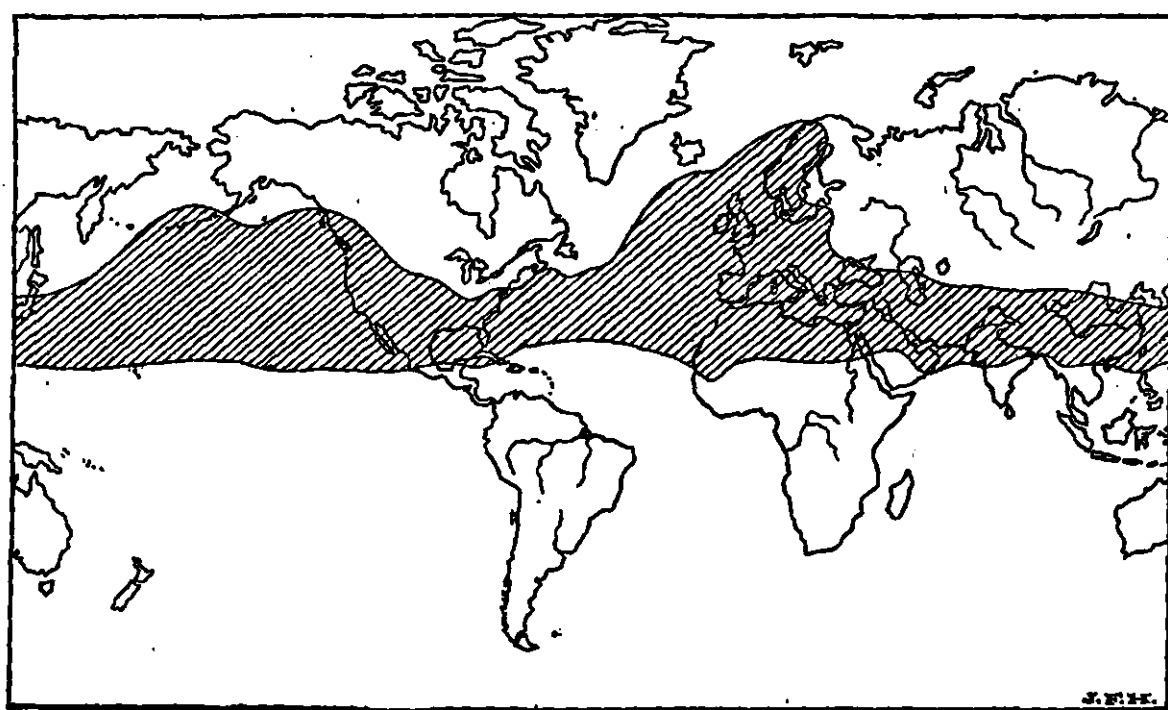
WORLD HISTORY : (1) RIVER VALLEYS

W E have already remarked that not only is an understanding of history impossible without some knowledge of geography, but that one can only study geography intelligently—so far, that is, as it is related to the life of men—by studying it *historically*. Our subject-matter, as we have said, is not “the surface of the earth as the home of man” in the abstract, but as the home of particular groups of *men* at particular stages of development. To understand the effect and the relative importance of geographical factors we must study them in relation to these stages. In this and the three following chapters we shall attempt to do this in the framework of a very simplified outline of world history.

**World History
—a Growth
Towards World
Interdependence**

This economic-geographic view of history emphasises one aspect of the story of man's development which is of especial import to us as members of the international working-class movement: It shows us a steady progress towards more and more inter-communication between, and a greater and greater interdependence of, all the peoples of the earth.

On the other hand it may be as well to state clearly that the other fundamentally important factor in history, *the struggle of classes*, the exploitation of one social section of men by another section, and the appropriation by this latter of most if not all of the various benefits resulting from man's steadily increasing power over natural conditions and resources, does not come directly within our scope in this book. We shall often have to speak of the men of a particular group or society collectively, without referring specifically to the fact that each such society was divided into classes of exploiters and exploited. The working-class student of history will of course never forget that fact, even where the limitations of our subject here compel us to take it “as read.”



MAP 5.—The North Temperate Zone. The shading marks the area north of the Equator with a January temperature of between 32° and 70° . (Compare with Map 1.)

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

In what precise part of the earth man actually originated we do not know. We do not even know certainly whether he was originally a tropical animal, or made his first steps in temperate lands. But we do know where he has made the greatest progress—where, in short, history has been made.

Tropical and Temperate Zones do know where he has made the greatest progress—where, in short, history has been made. "The history of the world," remarks Fairgrieve ("Geography and World Power," p. 19), "is mainly the history of temperate regions lying roughly between latitudes 80° and 60°."¹

This contrast between tropical and temperate regions, in their effect upon man, must be our jumping-off place for our rapid journey through history. It is on primitive man, but feebly equipped with the tools and knowledge, that the influence of geographical (natural) conditions tells most directly. And the biggest and most far-reaching condition of all—climate—at this early stage of man's development affected him in unmistakable fashion. It is perfectly true that "man ranks among the most adaptable organic beings on the earth—no climate is absolutely intolerable to him—only the absence of food supply . . . will exclude him from the most inhospitable region."² But it is very much truer of twentieth-century man than of man the savage or barbarian. Moreover, while no climate may be "absolutely intolerable" to him, some climates are infinitely better adapted than others to encouraging his development. It was because the temperate zone supplied a greater degree of *stimulus* to man that human history came to be the history of temperate regions.

In the lands near the equator life, so to speak, was too easy. Man here remained merely a food-gatherer, and there was no incentive for him to take the step upward and become a food-producer. "Where man has remained in the tropics, with few exceptions he has suffered arrested development. His nursery has kept him a child."³

Not only was life too easy; it was just as easy *all the year round*. "In equatorial regions one day is very much like another day, while farther north one day is not like another day. Owing to the swing of the *seasons* in temperate latitudes there are summer days and winter days . . . lack

¹ Cf. "Capital," Vol. I, pp. 522-4.

² Semple, p. 610.

³ Semple, pp. 634-5.

AN OUTLINE OF

of food at one time and comparative plenty at another. Thus, in Equatorial Africa, for example, *the cycle being the day*, the tendency is for races as for individuals not to look ahead, but to live in the present and to make no provision for the future; whereas in Temperate Europe, *the cycle being the year*, the tendency is to take thought for the days to come."¹ Man in Europe was thus *stimulated* by natural conditions to exert himself more, and so develop his intelligence; man in Africa was not so stimulated. If you are a European, give the glory to climate!²

Our next step, having noted this contrast between equatorial and temperate regions—especially the influence of the *seasons* upon man—is to note *where* exactly in the temperate zone civilisation **Conditions** did actually develop, and to ask *why* it **Favourable to** began in these particular areas rather than **Human** in others. **Development**

But first, what was the stage of development reached by men before this higher stage of "civilisation" was attained? "Savage" men had been hunters and fishers, and, later, very primitive agriculturists. From hunting animals man, at the "barbarian" stage, turned to domesticating them (and so, incidentally, the Sacred Rights of Private Property arose); as well as a pastoralist he became a more efficient cultivator of the soil. But he had not for the most part made sufficient progress in this latter respect to enable him to feed himself (we are speaking, note, of the temperate zone) on the produce of one limited area of land. Therefore he was a nomad—which does not, at any rate in the higher stages of nomadism, mean that he wandered aimlessly over the face of the earth, but that he moved at different seasons from one area to another in a regular seasonal sequence. At any of these stages, the "unit" of society was a small one—a tribe or clan of a few score or a few hundreds of individuals, each group, broadly speaking, self-contained and self-sufficient, and, however "communist" the relations of its

¹ Fairgrieve, p. 18.

² The only exceptions to this general statement that no civilisation has developed within the tropical zone are those of Mexico and Peru, in the New World. Note (1) that these were of strictly limited development; and (2) that the scene of each was a high, relatively cool plateau, with only a restricted area of fertile soil in place of the typical tropical plenty.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

component members might be, not at all fraternally disposed as a group towards other groups.

Now "civilisation" meant—among many other things—a *settled* life in one particular area. This involved, if not at the outset, at any rate at a very early stage, a considerable advance in the technique of agriculture (or horticulture), *i.e.*, in the business of food production. And advance in this respect rapidly paved the way for greater specialisation of labour in other activities, and consequently for a proportional increase in the size of the social "unit." From these roots the "fruits of civilisation"—good and bad—ripened.

What geographical conditions were essential to this kind of development?

(1) *Fertility of soil.* Not the superabundant fertility of the tropics, but one which would yield more than ordinarily good results to what at the outset must necessarily have been primitive methods of culture, and which was capable of tremendous increase once those methods began to be improved.

(2) *Natural protection, i.e.*, geographical features which would keep marauders at a distance and safeguard the accumulated wealth of the men who had *settled* in the area. Since we have already in the last chapter described the importance of this in the case of Egypt, there is no need to go into detail here.

(3) In part arising out of (2)—a fairly *clearly*-marked natural area, forming a geographical *unit*, with easy means of internal communication; and one which, while not too small to accommodate a fairly large population, was yet not so large as to be entirely beyond the control of such a population at a fairly early stage.

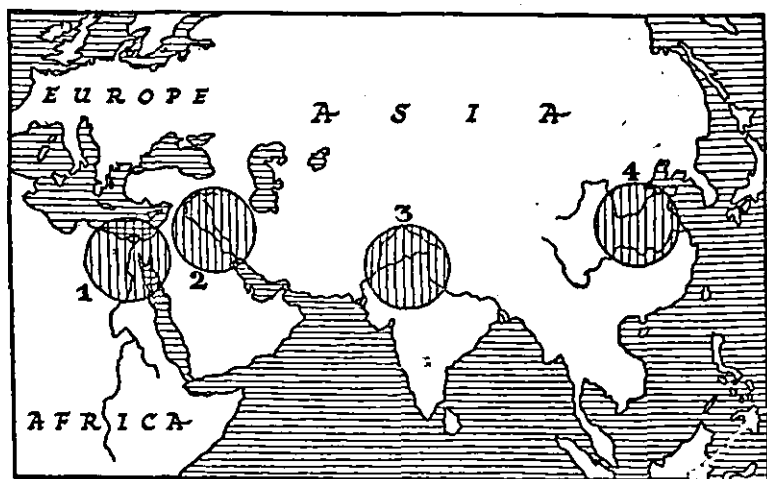
And now—to turn from "abstract" conditions to concrete realities—where do we actually find civilisation growing up in the Old World?

Where Chiefly, in four river valleys (or "pairs"
Civilisation of river valleys): the valley of the Nile
Began (Egypt), of the Tigris and Euphrates (Mesopotamia), the Indus and Ganges (India), and the Hwang-ho (China). In each of these four areas the geographical conditions for civilisation are to a greater or

AN OUTLINE OF

less extent realised. In each the rivers provided a constantly fertilised soil; in each mountains, sea, or desert afforded natural protection; each was a naturally defined "unit," with the river serving as an easy means of internal communication. And the differences in degree of these primarily important natural conditions in the four areas provide significant clues to the differences in the history of each.

In Egypt, as we have already seen (Chap. I), desert and sea combined to provide a natural protection which amounted to almost complete isolation; so complete, indeed, that,



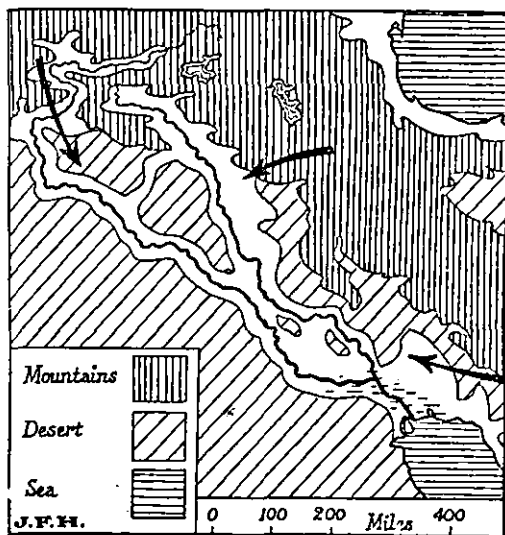
MAP 6.—The four river-valley "cradles" of civilization: (1) the Nile, (2) the Tigris and Euphrates, (3) the Indus and Ganges, and (4) the Hwang-ho.

when the obstacle set by nature in the valley had been surmounted, when life within the area was (relatively) easy—at any rate for the ruling castes—when, that is, a stage of development was reached when foreign intercourse was needed as a spur to further effort, this isolation became a definite disadvantage.

In Mesopotamia, on the other hand, the natural protection was much less complete. Here deserts, mountains, and swamps were protective features, with the sea on the south as, in Egypt, it formed the northern "frontier." But the "ring fence" around Mesopotamia was pierced by several gaps.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

And, further, the lands outside the fence, particularly on the north and east, were habitable—which meant that endless eyes looked through the gaps. Thus, though there was ample geographical protection during the more primitive stages, there came a time when invader after invader, tempted by the wealth of the valley, poured over the mountains. “The history of the Tigris and Euphrates from 2500 B.C. onwards is the history of the endeavours of surrounding peoples



MAP 7.—The Tigris-Euphrates valley. The arrows show the direction from which, at different periods, invaders poured into the valley lands.

to become possessed of the fertile heart lands.”¹ And this important difference in the matter of natural protection between Egypt and Mesopotamia had a great deal to do with two characteristics of the peoples of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys which distinguished them from the men of the Nile. Not being able to depend to anything like the same extent on natural defences as the latter, the Babylonians and Assyrians developed military organisation and the whole technique of war much further than the Egyptians did.

¹ Fairgrieve, p. 37.

AN OUTLINE OF

And secondly; having far greater facilities for communicating with surrounding peoples, their civilisation, originally—like Egypt—based on agriculture, came gradually to be based far more on *trade*. Both these developments, of course, meant additional stimulus to further technical and economic advances of various kinds. Thus, while Egypt, being “safe,” tended to stagnate, Mesopotamia, dominated successively by Assyrians, Medes, and Persians, lent much more support to that famous aphorism, “Nothing is; everything is becoming.”

But let us return to the earlier stages of the history of each area to note how the fertility of the soil, and its tremendous productive possibilities so soon
Social Effects of Irrigation as the technique of agriculture was carried further, encouraged co-operation between larger and larger groups of men, and so provided the economic basis for a political State. The soil of the Nile valley is fertilised by the regular periodic flooding of the river; it is this flooding which chiefly marks the *seasonal* change in Egypt. To the first dwellers in the valley that flooding must have been an unmitigated nuisance—if it was not sheer disaster. Not until man learned to *use* the floods for his own ends, for purposes of irrigation, could the possibilities of the soil be realised. Now schemes of irrigation, to be effective, must be carried out over large areas and by considerable bodies of men. Separate little schemes for thousands of separate little “allotments” would obviously soon be found to be wasteful. If a river of the size of the Nile were to be “harnessed” for man’s purposes, then all the dwellers in its valley (or in large areas of it) must perforce act together to that end. Nobody, of course, sat down on a sand heap in ancient Egypt and thought all this out. Doubtless, it took the people—unimaginative and conservative as humans are everywhere—some centuries to realise it; doubtless it gave opportunities to more far-seeing groups of people to lay the foundations of power and privilege for themselves. But the natural conditions *did* in the long run supply the stimulus to new kinds of effort, to co-operation, division of labour—and so to a politically unified State extending over a large area. That State was founded on *labour*, applied to the peculiar problems of the valley. “The

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

real heroes of the country are not the kings who have perpetuated their braggart deeds in chiselled granite or sun-dried brick, but the dim millions by whose labour the land was redeemed and cultivated to the last inch of soil and the last drop of water.”¹ And exactly the same is true of China—where, indeed, the directive engineers, if not the “dim millions,” were honoured more than war lords or priests—and of Mesopotamia, where the problem, though in the first place one of draining swamps rather than of “harnessing” flood water, was essentially the same. “This unifying and stimulating task of utilising and controlling the water was the same task which in various forms promoted the early civilisation of the Hwang-ho and the Yang-tse basins, India, Mesopotamia, Persia, Peru, Mexico.”²

Lastly, let us note the influence of the river itself as a factor making for social and political unification. It was

The River as a Unifying Factor

first, of course, an easy means of communication between the dwellers on each side of its banks throughout its entire basin. To this day “the Chinese call such roads as exist in China ‘dry ways’—the natural sequence to the idea that *the way* is a wet way, a river.” The river is, therefore, very obviously a bond of union between great numbers of men. And it is a bond in another sense, since it sets them all certain common problems and gives them all certain common interests. *Rivers unite*. And they do this, of course, most fully and effectually where the advance of civilisation has not as yet produced other and even more efficient means of unification.

The fact that the river was the principal means of communication—in such a country, indeed, as Egypt, the only possible means—meant, further, the early development of *water transport*; a step which, as we shall now see, paved the way for the further spread of civilisation.

A. B. Cowan, “Master Clues in World History,” p. 46. ²Example, p. 329.

AN OUTLINE OF

CHAPTER III

WORLD HISTORY: (2) INLAND SEAS

OUR next "chapter" of world history is the longest in the whole story of civilisation. It lasted for between thirty and forty centuries—from somewhere about 2000 B.C. up to the last decade of the fifteenth century of the Christian era. It was the period when history centred round the Mediterranean Sea.¹

The "Mediterranean Chapter" Why, for so long a period, were the coastlands of this particular sea the scene of men's greatest activity and most clearly marked progress?

We have seen how the beginnings of civilisation were linked up with certain technical-economic advances, at first in agriculture, and later in constructional works necessitated by schemes of water control, irrigation, &c.; and how, further, these advances were made in certain areas where the natural (*i.e.*, geographical) conditions were favourable. We have seen, too, how the rivers which served as water supplies were also used as the main means of communication; and so *water transport* came to be developed, from the first crude rafts and hollowed-out trees, through small wicker-work vessels² covered with skins and hides, up to fairly large boats with twenty oars and paddles which figure in the earliest pictorial monuments of Egypt, dating from about 2500 B.C.³

It was when men had so far developed *water transport* as to be able to sail out on to the sea itself that the next stage in the story of civilisation—its *spread* from certain centres to all the lands surrounding a particular sea—began. And that next step was taken where the geographical conditions were most favourable.

Running diagonally between the two great land masses of the Old World—Africa and Europe-Asia—is a belt of

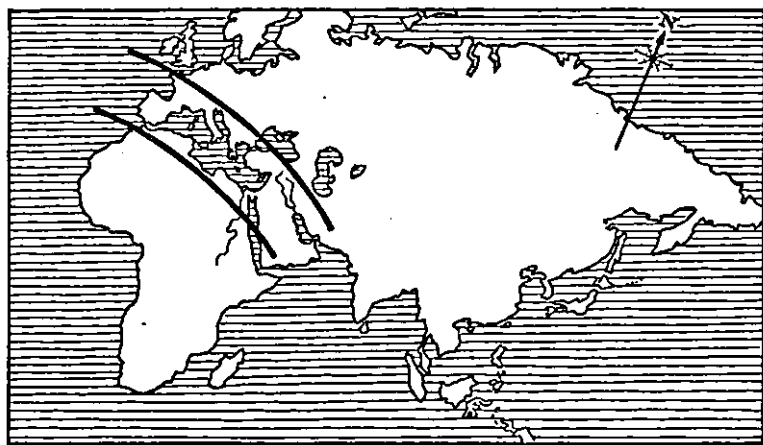
¹ This chapter should be read alongside the physical map of Europe, Atlas, p. 6.

² Cf. Moses' "ark of bulrushes."

³ Cf. illustrations to chap. xvii, "Outline of History," H. G. Wells.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

sheltered inland seas which were not too formidable an obstacle for these early navigators to face. The Chinese, whose rivers emptied themselves into the open ocean ("pacific" only in name) never became ocean seamen, though they were skilled river navigators; the "next step"—from river to open ocean—was too difficult. It was the sheltered Mediterranean, with its many islands, peninsulas, and promontories making it possible for the voyager never to lose sight of land, which became the "nursery of seamen." And "what was of even more importance for these mariners



MAP 8.—The diagonal belt of inland seas dividing the two great land masses of the Old World.

of old, the Mediterranean is a tideless sea, so that almost anywhere, at almost any time, small vessels could easily land."¹

This stage brings us to the beginnings of *European* civilisation. And these earliest European civilisations were all *maritime*—based on control of the sea.

The earliest of them, that of Crete, was almost as old as that of Egypt. It spread over the islands and coasts of the Ægean Sea. At a very early period its people must have mastered the problem of sea navigation, at least in some

¹ Falgrieve, p. 47.

AN OUTLINE OF

primitive way, for the sea was the one link between its various island and mainland-coast centres; and it was at the same time their great *protection* against invasion. They carried this art of navigation finally to a fairly high stage of efficiency, for they were trading direct with Egypt between 2000 and 1000 B.C. And by overland routes across the highlands of Asia Minor they were early in communication with the Mesopotamian valleys.¹ The "zenith" of this Ægean civilisation was from 2500 to 2000 B.C.

By this latter date the ships of another people were sailing the Mediterranean. These were the Phœnicians, a Semitic race, whose first ventures were probably made on the quiet waters of the Persian Gulf, into which the two great rivers of Mesopotamia flow. As Mesopotamian trade developed, it spread westward, overland, to the Mediterranean; and it was on this Syrian coast that the Phœnicians founded their first great trading bases, the ports of Tyre and Sidon. For close on 2,000 years, right down to the destruction of the city they built much later, Carthage, the Phœnician merchant ships were the chief means of intercourse between the peoples of the Mediterranean basin. They were, moreover, "middle men between Orient and Occident," sailing down the Red Sea and along the coast of Arabia. Everywhere they established trading stations and colonies, "so that by 1000 B.C. the Phœnician confederacy, though loosely knit, formed a whole which had to be reckoned with."²

Note about them two things which indicate the advance made in social development by this date: they were traders, not conquerors; and their whole confederacy was *based on sea power*,³ not on control of a "geographical unit" of land. The sea, mastered once and for all, had become a *link*—was no longer a barrier. The waters which had kept men apart were now highways.

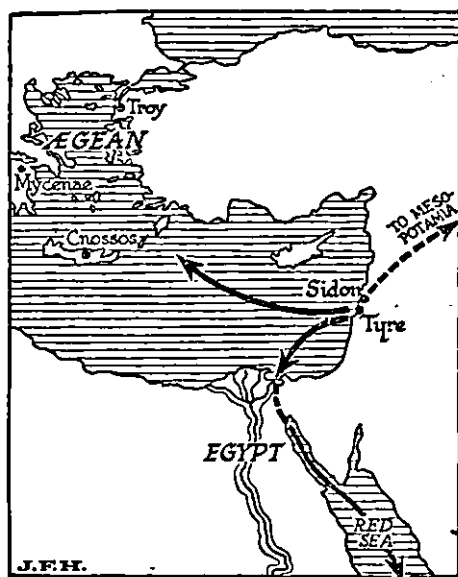
¹ It is interesting to note that another early civilisation, that of the Hittites, developed in the mountainous area which controlled the main routes between the Ægean on the west and Babylonia on the south-east. The position of the Hittites, though in some respects similar to that of the Hebrews later, was much stronger, and they were therefore able to take full advantage of it. They were not so closely sandwiched between two great Powers as was Palestine; and the nature of their country gave them the natural protection which Palestine lacked.

² Fairgrieve, p. 49.

³ "The chief motive power was the slave with his oar; and slaves cost so little that owners had no incentive to invent a better propeller." (J. E. Spearg, "Master Mariners," p. 17.)

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Gradually, the Phoenicians spread some sort of civilisation round all the coast of the *Eastern Mediterranean*, where their power was at first concentrated; and then they brought the "Far West"—the lands now called Italy, France, Spain, and Tunis—into touch with their eastern bases. Civilisation was thus no longer confined to more or less isolated centres; a whole group of peoples and class-States had become a geographical unity—linked by Phoenician sea power; and



MAP 9.—The Phoenician bases of Tyre and Sidon.

even to a certain extent an economic unity—linked by the Phoenician traders.

It was into this Eastern Mediterranean world that, probably rather later than 1000 B.C., there came a knowledge of the use of *iron*, and thenceforward a rapid improvement of tools and weapons of all kinds which resulted in greatly accelerated progress. Who were the first discoverers of the new metal we do not know; probably barbarians coming south from the Danube lands first brought it into the Mediter-

Iron
Supplants
Bronze

AN OUTLINE OF

ranean area. For this Eastern Mediterranean world was not, note, a *naturally protected* area as the old isolated centres had been. Except on the south, where the vast wastes of the Sahara formed an impregnable bulwark against the peoples of Africa, it lay open to invasion by the barbarians outside. This "Mediterranean chapter" of history is to a large extent the story of one after another of these outer peoples breaking into the Mediterranean world and being "absorbed" and civilised in turn. A nomad group—and nomadism exists, remember, chiefly in arid lands—is almost bound at some stage to increase to a number beyond the capacity of its own land to support; and when it reaches that stage it inevitably overflows into other lands. This happened again and again, in India and in China as well as in the Mediterranean. In earlier stages it would most probably have meant the complete blotting-out of civilisation—hence the tremendous importance of *natural protection* in this earlier stage. But now that this higher technique and accumulated knowledge was no longer confined to one or two centres, but had spread over considerable areas, the coming of barbarians, though it might mean a temporary set-back—a "Dark Ages" lasting for a longer, or shorter, period—in the long run meant only the still further extension of civilisation.

The barbarians who now poured into this world of Ægeans, Phœnicians, and Egyptians included the race we call the Greeks—the people who were next to take the centre of the stage and carry civilisation further still. Greek civilisation, note, was the first based on the use of *iron*. The Ægean civilisation which the Greek barbarians overthrew was based on *bronze*; and the contest between the two was probably as unequal as that, two thousand five hundred years later, between the iron-armed Europeans and the stone and bronze using peoples of Mexico and Peru in the New World.

From the Balkan peninsula the Greeks stepped off to the islands of the Ægean; becoming at length seafarers instead of nomad pastoralists. After destroying the Ægean civilisation of which Cnossos (Crete) was the crown and Troy one of the chief centres,¹ they sailed through the Straits

¹ The Philistines of Jewish Old Testament history were probably a branch of this Cretan people who had fled from the islands before the conquering Greeks to the coast-land of the Levant.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

into the Black Sea (establishing the city of Byzantium at the Black Sea gate) and went westwards to southern Italy and Sicily. In time, they too became traders and the chief rivals of the Phœnicians; and their geographical situation at the very centre of this ancient world—"at the cross road of Europe and Asia"—in control of all the main trade routes was the "natural" basis of that "glory that was Greece" during the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

Finally, Alexander the Macedonian (335-323 B.C.) made a political unity of this Eastern Mediterranean area, conquering Egypt and the Persian power which now ruled in Mesopotamia, and utterly destroying the Phœnician city of Tyre. "For the first time the capital of Egypt was placed by the sea. The ancient capitals of Thebes and Memphis were inland; when the Greeks ruled they had to place their capital, Alexandria, where they could gain fresh strength from their base in Hellas over the water."¹ The political unification did not last long after Alexander's death; but the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean remained "Hellenised"—Greek in culture and in the general character of its civilisation. Henceforward great cities grew apace. "At the time of Alexander only three cities of the world, Athens, Syracuse, and Carthage, had populations numbering 100,000. Because of the growth of commerce after Alexander's time, a growth due to the spread of Greek civilisation, we find, a hundred years later, four cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants each—Seleukia, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage, while Syracuse then contained many more than 100,000, and Rome, Corinth, Rhodes, and Ephesus boasted of at least that number."² In Asia Minor "no less than five hundred cities were engaged in trade and manufactures . . . Milesian cloths and carpets . . . bronzes, gold and silver smiths' work, iron work from Cibyra, carpets from Laodicea, pottery, marble, the dyes of Hierapolis, wines from Tmolus. Through these cities too came the traffic of the further East—even from China, India, and Tartary . . ."³

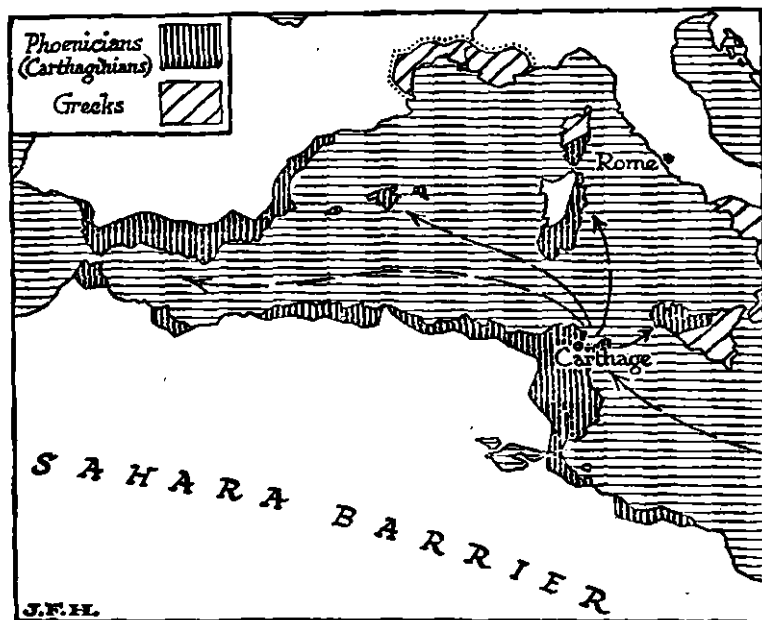
Meantime, even before the Greeks had become serious rivals, the Phœnicians of Tyre had transferred a large part

¹ Falgrieve, p. 63.

² Spears, "Master Mariners," p. 86.

³ Gibbins, "History of Commerce in Europe," p. 23.

AN OUTLINE OF

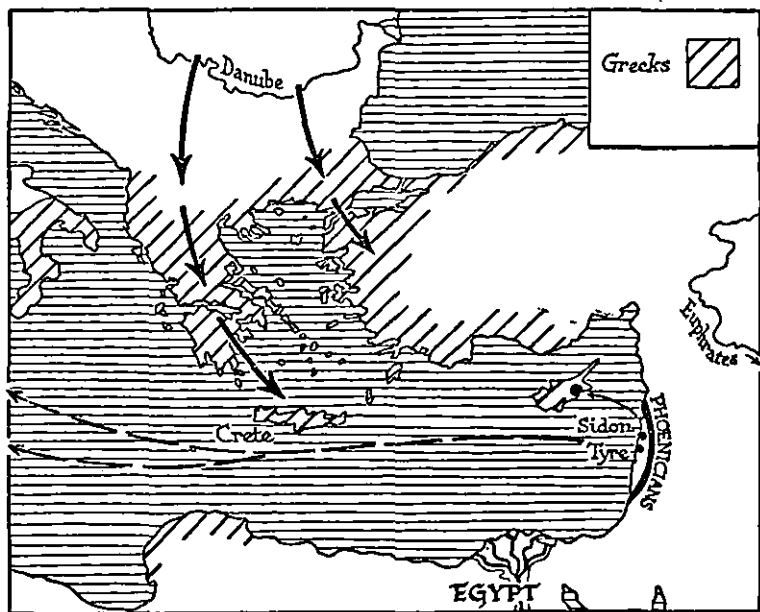


MAP 10.—The Western Mediterranean, the "Far West" of the ancient world, showing Phoenician and Greek colonies.

of their activities to the further, western, half of the Mediterranean. In 800 B.C. they founded the great city of Carthage, on the north African coast, between the sea and the desert, just where a strip of high land catches rain-bringing winds and so forms a piece of habitable, fairly fertile territory. And from Carthage they ruled over the African coast lands, over a little of Sicily, over Corsica and Sardinia, and southern Spain. This time they did exercise some control over considerable land areas, but their power was still based upon control of the sea which linked islands and coasts together. While the Greek power was supreme in the Eastern, Carthage was "overlord" in the Western Mediterranean.

Then came the rise to power—eventually to control of the entire sea and all its coasts—of a people whose homeland was the peninsula which forms the line of division between the two halves of the Mediterranean sea: the Romans. At first, for they lived **The Area Unified** on the western side of the peninsula,

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY



MAP 11.—The Eastern Mediterranean showing the lands invaded and peopled by the Greeks, 1000-800 B.C.

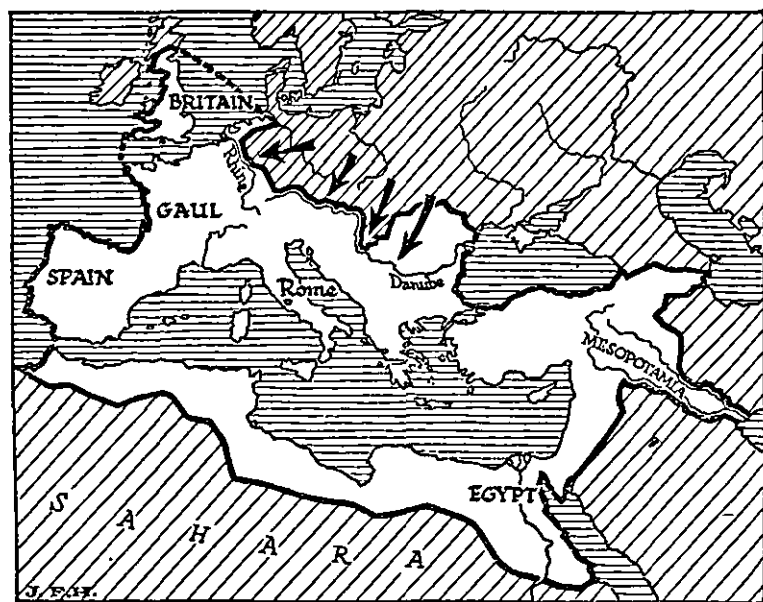
they looked westwards—towards Carthage. It was more than a century after Rome first went to war with Carthage (264 B.C.) that the latter city was finally destroyed (146 B.C.) and Rome succeeded Carthaginian in the western sea. Within another century the Roman power had not only pushed up the Rhone valley into Gaul (France) but extended over the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean also. By A.D. 100, Mesopotamia and Armenia had been conquered, and all the African coast colonised, while north-westwards the channel had been crossed from Gaul and Britain at length brought into the Mediterranean “picture.” Rome reaped the benefit of “the cementing power of the Mediterranean and the fairly unified civilisation which this enclosed sea had been evolving since the dawn of Cretan and Phœnician trade.”¹ The Roman Empire was a geographical unity, with the inland sea as its heart; the Mediterranean world

¹ Sample, p. 101.

AN OUTLINE OF

was at last brought under one political rule, based on inter-communication between, and the economic interdependence of, every part of it. Henceforth, European civilisation took the lead in world history.

Before continuing our historical narrative, let us pause to note the three main climatic divisions of Europe. From



MAP 12.—The political unification of the whole Mediterranean area—the Roman Empire at its greatest extent. Note that Rome also added to the purely Mediterranean lands the countries of the temperate North-West, her northern frontier roughly corresponding with the climatic dividing line between these and "the lands of winter snows" in the north and north-east. The arrows show the general direction of the barbarian invasions, which later broke up the Empire.

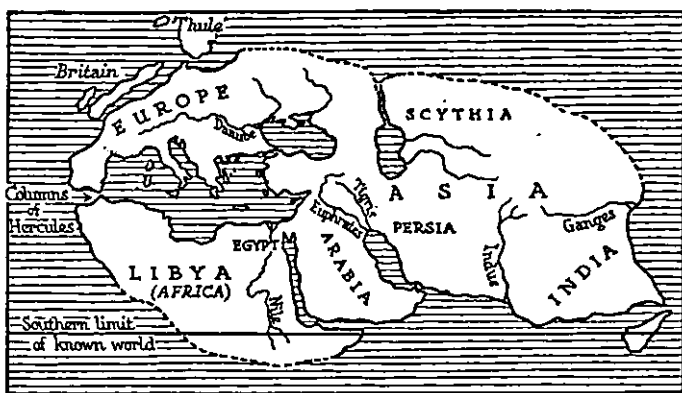
south to north these are: (1) the warm Mediterranean lands; (2) the more temperate lands of the north-west, the cold of whose winters and the heat of whose summers are both modified by the south-west winds which blow in the same direction as the Gulf Stream flows;¹ and (3) the cold lands of the north and north-east—the lands of winter snows.

¹ Note that it is the *winds*, and not the Gulf Stream, which predominantly affect the climate of these countries.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Civilisation, as we have seen, first centred in (1); now the Romans were carrying it into (2). For many more centuries (3) was to remain outside the world picture.

And let us also note here a *technical* advance made by the Romans which made for a greater degree of unification in the territories they controlled, and which also enabled them, as we have noticed above, to extend their territories northward and north-westward into Europe. That technical advance was a development in *land transport*. The Romans made *roads*.¹ They were no longer content merely to



MAP 13.—The World, according to Eratosthenes, a Greek of Alexandria (276 194 B.C.). Note that the "world" consists mainly of the Mediterranean lands and coasts, which are fairly accurately mapped; but extends to North-West Europe and Britain, and eastward to India (which a century earlier had been actually invaded by Alexander). It is interesting to compare this map with No. 8.

follow natural tracks and "ways," but used the art and the science of building construction to cut straight roads between given points; and also (what was obviously necessitated by this) to build aqueducts—water ways—in order to ensure a water supply wherever they needed one. They carried this business, indeed, much further than did any of the European civilisations which followed them—down practically to our own day.

¹ The Persians, as their land empire spread from Persia over Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, had also built roads to serve as their main lines of communication, but on nothing like so elaborate a scale as the Romans did centuries later.

AN OUTLINE OF

But this single unified control of the whole Mediterranean area did not last long. The Roman northern frontier, in Europe, corresponded to no natural line of defence; and it was much too long a line to fortify adequately. Once again the nomad peoples outside broke in, this time in wave after wave. Goths, Franks, Germans, Vandals, and Huns poured down to the coast of the ancient sea; and the Empire fell into two halves—the two geographical halves of the Mediterranean which Rome, for a short time, had made one. A Western Empire centred on Rome, an Eastern on Byzantium—now rechristened Constantinople, the city of Constantine, the Emperor who transferred his throne thither.

During the "Dark Ages" which followed, civilisation, very slowly, spread over the land mass of Western Europe. The barbarian invaders were learning things from the subject peoples who had inherited something of Roman culture, and this culture—adapted to the needs of the new "overlords"—was being carried by the Christian Church into new areas. That strange mixture of civilisation and barbarism, the Feudal System, based on land tenure, was a quite "natural" result of the conditions, political, economic, and geographical, of the time.¹ And during these centuries of adaptation and change the national States of Western and Central Europe gradually took shape.

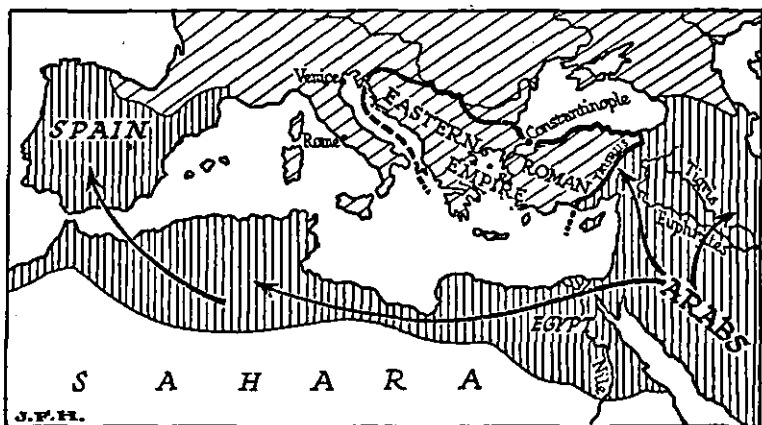
Meantime, another wave of invaders—originally desert nomads—had broken into the Mediterranean, this time from a new quarter—the south-east. These were the Arabs—the Saracens as they came to be called. Within little more than a century after the death of Mohammad (A.D. 632) these new comers had swept across Syria to the line of the Taurus Mountains, westward across Egypt and along the coasts of Africa, and then across the narrow straits into Spain itself. This invasion, note, was no "wave of barbarism." In the sciences of mathematics, astronomy, and medicine the Arabs were ahead of the Europeans. "The civilisation of the peoples under Arabian rule was, when tried by almost

¹ It would be exceedingly interesting to get a comparative study of European feudalism and the feudalism of some of the races of Central Africa—both alike based on serf labour, primitive agriculture, and the dominance of warrior castes. Here is an opportunity for a research student!

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

any test, and certainly by any economic test, incomparably higher than that of Christendom."¹ The Mediterranean was no longer a link, but "a moat between the rival powers" of Islam and Christendom. The Eastern Roman Empire was now reduced to the southern part of the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor west of the Taurus, *i.e.*, it was centred once more round the Ægean, as Crete and Greece had been in earlier days; the Western had already broken into various smaller "kingdoms."

But still the Mediterranean dominated European civilisation. The Papacy was a Mediterranean power, and the Pope



MAP 14.—The Mediterranean as a "moat" between Arabs and Europeans (Arabs, darker shading).

of Rome was a kind of "overlord" of the emperors and kings of the north and west. The great Italian trading cities, now rising to power as order evolved out of chaos, were the commercial centres of Europe. Venice rose to greatness as the chief emporium on the European side of the "moat"; but the Moslems, like the Phœnicians of old, held the keys of the gates communicating with the Red Sea and the East. And then the Pope called all Europe to take part in a series of Mediterranean wars; "Holy" wars—Crusades—for the redemption of the Holy Places, and the

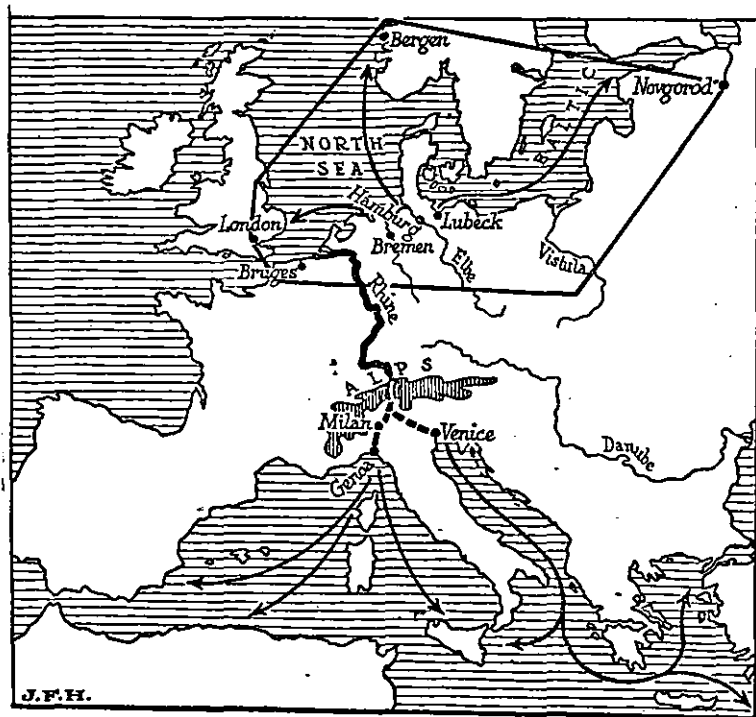
¹ Ferris, "History of War and Peace."

AN OUTLINE OF.

keys of Eastern commerce, from the infidel.¹ The Moslem power was weakened, not destroyed. For a century and a half these wars raged; and all the time Venice and Genoa grew richer and more prosperous.

We are nearing the end of the "Mediterranean chapter." First let us note that before it ended another *inland sea area*, further north—a sort of offshoot from the Mediterranean centres, but linked geographically and economically with them—had been brought into the "zone" of civilisation. From Venice, at the head of the Adriatic Sea, the passes of the Alps led northwards to the

A Second "Inland Sea" Area



MAP 15.—The Hansa inland sea area in Northern Europe, and the Rhine link with the Mediterranean.

¹ Cf. Britain's interest in Palestine, A.D. 1900 odd, based on precisely the same reasons as Venetian interest, A.D. 1100—its "key" position at the gate (now a water-gate, Suez) of the Red Sea.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Rhine valley, "the main street of North-western Europe," and so to the coast of the North Sea. North Sea and Baltic were now "unified," as the Phœnicians had unified the Mediterranean, by the merchants of the Hansa League whose commercial bases were the north German towns at the "terminus" of the Rhine route. From Hamburg they had extended their influence along the North Sea coast, from the Rhine mouth as far as Bergen; from Lybeck eastwards into the Baltic and as far north-east as Novgorod; south-east into Central Europe along the water ways of the Elbe and the Vistula. Trade, once more, was extending the area of civilisation—and this was happening, again, under a parallel set of geographical conditions to those under which earlier traders had operated in the southern sea. "The Baltic played the rôle of a northern Mediterranean. The countless shuttles of the Hansa ships wove a web of commercial intercourse between its remotest shores."

Trade and the needs of trade were turning men's eyes to wider horizons. The Crusades themselves were "the first general step towards the discovery of New Worlds, East and West." The Mediterranean, which had been for nearly four thousand years the centre of human history, was shortly to become a sort of grass-grown by-street.

How that came about is the subject-matter of our next chapter.

AN OUTLINE OF

CHAPTER IV

WORLD HISTORY : (3) THE OCEAN

WE have followed the course of world history from its misty beginnings in the Nile valley six or seven thousand years ago up to a period less than half a thousand years from our own day. We have seen European civilisation centred round one inland sea, the Mediterranean; spreading gradually thence, by land and river routes, northwards and westwards over the mainland of Europe. The Sahara barrier kept the peoples of Africa out of touch with this growing civilisation; though certain technical advances, *e.g.*, the use of iron, in time got through to these also.¹ We have seen again and again the outer peoples—the barbarians from the great land mass of Europe-Asia²—break into the little world of civilisation and affect the course of its history in various ways. The coming of the last of the nomad peoples who succeeded in forcing a way into Europe itself—the Turks—indirectly led to tremendous developments, beginning a new chapter in world history; the chapter which followed the opening of *ocean routes*.

“The transformation of the ocean into a highway by the development of navigation is a late occurrence in the history of man, and is perhaps the highest phase of his adaptation to environment, because an adaptation which placed at his disposal that vast water area (three-quarters of the earth’s surface) from which he had previously been excluded.”³ Not merely because it opened up this vast area to maræ but because once he had launched his ship on the ocean the way to all the coasts of the world lay open to him, this conquest of the ocean is one of the major events of history.

¹ Before the time of the discovery of America, all the peoples of the Old World even those least in touch with centres of civilisation, were using iron.

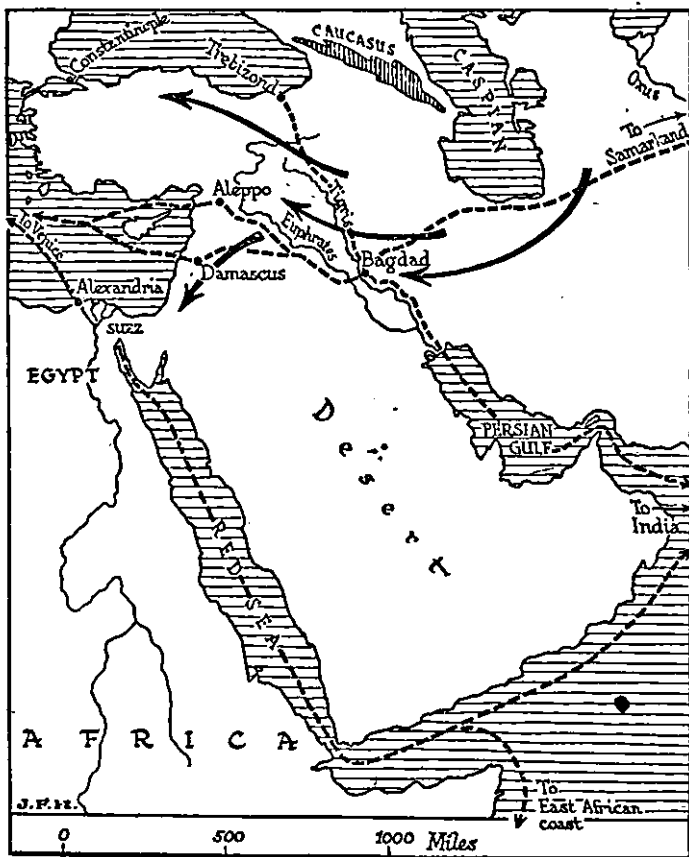
² Eurasia, as some geographical writers call the two continents, considered as one land mass.

³ Semple.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

“The oceans of the world are one.” Henceforward, man could use a highway leading to the very ends of the earth.

The coming of the Turk into Europe hastened this development in this way: So long as the Arabs controlled the Eastern Mediterranean there was a great The Way to and ever-increasing trade between Asia—the Indies “the Indies”—and the Mediterranean area. Arab ships voyaged down the Red Sea and by the coasts of Arabia and Persia to India. Arab caravans



MAP 16.—Arab trade routes, linking the Eastern Mediterranean with Asia and East Africa. The arrows show the direction in which the Turks pushed into this area.

AN OUTLINE OF

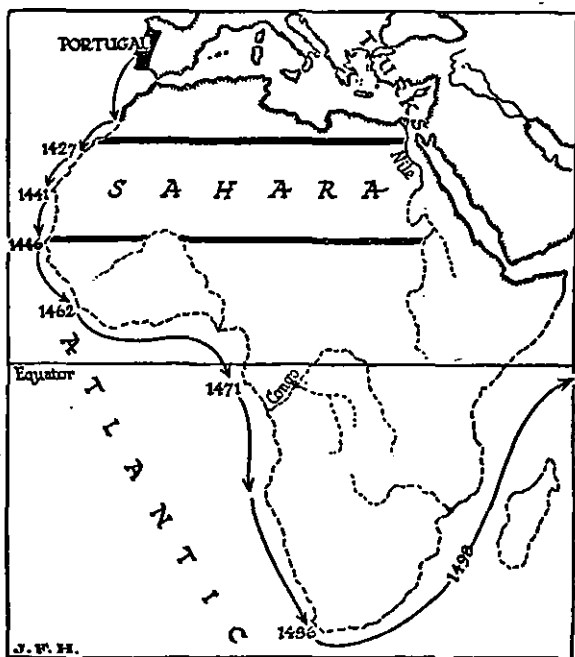
travelled the land routes eastward from Syria via Aleppo and Bagdad. And the Arabs held the "key" positions of Palestine and Egypt, controlling the Suez isthmus; whence Venetian and Genoese galleys carried the merchandise to the ports, of Europe. From the eleventh century onwards, the Mongol Turks—converted gradually to Mohammedanism—wrested more and more power from the Arabs. They came from the steppe-lands south and east of the Caspian, and by the middle of the fifteenth century they ruled over all Syria and Asia Minor, and had crossed into Europe itself, taking Constantinople in 1453. Egypt was still held by the Arabs; but the Turk was already reaching out to grasp that prize also, and, moreover, Turkish corsairs were everywhere threatening merchant ships in the eastern Mediterranean. The Turk was not like the Arab, a trader; he remained, wherever he conquered, a warrior barbarian. The total destruction of the trade between the Indies and Europe appeared to be imminent. And this trade had become a matter very directly affecting the lives of the mass of the people, and was by no means solely a matter of merchants' profits. "The farmers of the Middle Ages had no knowledge of the use of roots, such as turnips, to give winter feeding for cattle, with the result that a great proportion of the meat eaten throughout the winter had to be killed while the grazing lasted and salted for winter use. There was consequently in every country in Europe a great need for pepper, spices, and the like from the East, to be eaten with this salted meat, which was apt to be 'high.'"¹ A practicable way to the "Spice Islands" was accordingly a matter of first-rate importance.

Was there any other way to the Indies? Scholars recalled the theory of Pomponius Mela (A.D. 50), who held that the earth consisted of continents entirely surrounded by oceans, and that therefore the Indies could be reached by a journey round Africa. But common seamen believed that to sail further south than a certain point was to risk being turned black by an angry Deity—so the journey was not made in a day! It was made in various stages—extending over three-quarters of a century; and though all the time the lure of the Indies was in the background, more immediate objectives served to draw the Portuguese sailors

¹Kermack, "The Expansion of Britain," pp. 6-7.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

on, step by step. At first they crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to continue the fight against the Arabs (Moors) whom they had but recently expelled from their own land. Then they went further south, to grasp the nuggets of the Gold Coast; later still they sought slaves. "The slave trade, seasoned with gold dust, ivory, and pepper, kept the Portuguese



MAP 17.—The Portuguese discovery of the ocean way—round Africa—to the Indies.

interested in the African exploration."²¹ At the time when the Turks took Constantinople, the Portuguese had got no further than the Gambia. Thirty years later the Congo was reached. In 1486-7, Diaz "doubled" the Cape (of Good Hope). Two years before the end of the century (1498) Portuguese ships under Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape,

²¹Spears, "Master Mariners," p. 65

AN OUTLINE OF

sailed up the east coast of Africa, and reached Calicut on the western coast of India. The ocean way to the Indies had been opened.

But in the meantime a Genoese sailor, Christopher Columbus, financed by Portugal's rival, Spain, had sailed *westwards* to reach the same goal. If the world was round, as a learned man, Toscanelli, declared (though plain folks thought a "New World" him a fool and a heretic for saying so), then it was possible to reach the far eastern coast of Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic,



MAP 18.—Toscanelli's conception of the westward (Atlantic) route to Asia. In our map the Unknown Continent—America—is shown in dotted lines. Columbus's intended route is indicated by arrows. Actually, of course, he reached, in his first and subsequent voyages, the points marked by the figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Neither Toscanelli nor Columbus suspected that a whole unknown continent—a New World—blocked the way. Toscanelli drew a map of the world, in hemispheres, which was moderately accurate—except that America was not there! And when Columbus at length (in 1492) reached the islands off the coast of Central America, he believed that he had reached the Spice Islands somewhere off the coast of China,¹ and he called the islands the West Indies—the Indies reached by the western route. Not until more than a quarter of a century later did Magellan lead an expedition round the southern extremity of South America, and across the vast spaces of the Pacific to the Asiatic side. The East Indies were reached at last—by the western route. Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans were all conquered.²

The opening up of new routes, and the discovery of a new world, instantly affected the “balance of power” in Europe. The great trade route of the world was now the Cape route to India, and this was the Centre in the hands of the Portuguese. “Less than five years after da Gama returned from India the galleys from Alexandria and Beirut, which were wont to bring the spices, entered the harbour of Venice empty.”³ Their cargoes had all been shipped in Portuguese vessels sailing by the new ocean road back to Lisbon and Oporto. The Indian Ocean “became a Portuguese lake.” The Mediterranean centres, Venice and Genoa, declined rapidly; the Mediterranean itself was for nearly four centuries—down

¹ China (Cathay) and Japan (Cipangu) were known to the men of the later Middle Ages through the “Travels” of Marco Polo, a Venetian who (1271-1292) had journeyed overland (across Persia, Turkestan, and Mongolia) to China, and returned by way of the coast from Chincow to the Persian Gulf, and thence overland to Constantinople. (See map, chap. xxxiv, H. G. Wells’ “Outline of History.”)

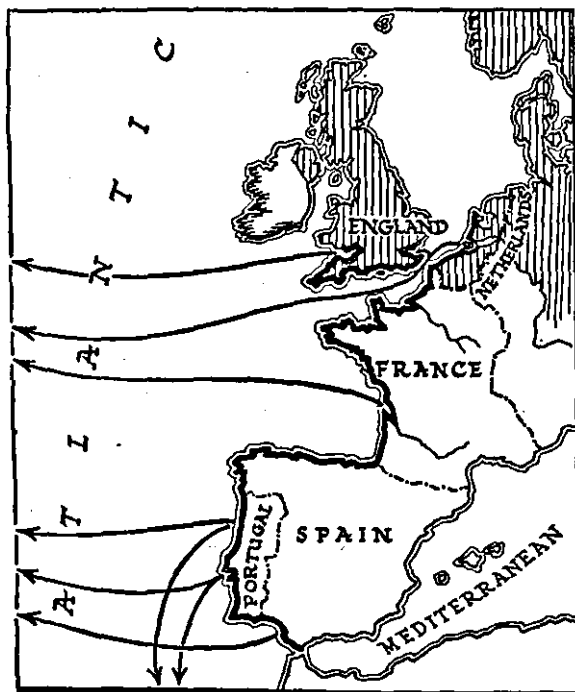
² There is no space in this brief outline to give more than a footnote reference to the inhabitants of the New World which Columbus discovered. These, scattered over its vast spaces (with widely varying climatic conditions), were for the most part living in various stages of savagery or barbarism. The population of all North America at the time of its discovery has been estimated at rather less than a million and a quarter, of whom about three-fourths lived in what is to-day the United States. Only in two or three centres—Mexico, Peru, Yucatan—was there some sort of civilisation “roughly parallel with the culture of pre-dynastic Egypt or the early Sumerian cities” (Wells’ “Outline,” chap. xxxv). That is to say, theirs was a Late Stone Age or Early Bronze Age culture. Nowhere in the continent, north or south, was iron in use; and the only domesticated animal was the dog, except in Peru where there were the llama and alpaca. Both Mexico and Peru were “naturally protected” areas; and both, as has been mentioned in an earlier chapter, found in the problem of a limited water-supply an incentive to social organisation.

³ Fairgrieve, p. 140.

AN OUTLINE OF

almost to our own day, when nineteenth-century engineers at last cut a ship canal through the isthmus of Suez, and so opened up a shorter route to Asia—a mere side street leading nowhere.

Second only in importance to the Cape route to India were the Atlantic routes to the New World. And these immediately gave to the countries on the north-western coast



MAP 19.—The new "main street of commerce"—the north-western front of Europe. The *Northern States*—those with no Mediterranean coast-line—were those which turned Protestant (except Ireland, which occupied an exceptionally favourable position on the "street," but whose development was deliberately sabotaged by England).

of Europe (as we have already noted in our first chapter) the premier importance. The lands with an Atlantic instead of a Mediterranean coastline, the lands which had hitherto been "outside," now found themselves occupying the most

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

advantageous position, with shop-fronts, so to speak, on the new street of commerce.

The maritime discoveries shifted the foci of the relations of European States from enclosed seas to the rim of the Atlantic. Venice and Genoa gave way to Bristol and Lagos. . . . The keen but circumscribed trade of the Baltic, which gave wealth and historical pre-eminence to the Hansa Towns from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries, lost its relative importance when the Atlantic became the maritime field of history. Leadership passed westward from Lubeck and Stralsund to Amsterdam and Bristol.¹

The history of the next three centuries is the history of the struggle for supremacy of these north-west European countries. Already, two centuries before the end of the "Mediterranean chapter," a commercial treaty had been made between Portugal and England (1294), which meant that a certain amount of trade along the coast of the Atlantic was being carried on. Spain and Portugal, as we have seen, took the lead in the new discoveries; and within a few weeks of Columbus' return from his first voyage, the Pope issued a Bull allotting the Western Hemisphere to Spain and the Eastern to Portugal. The nations further north, Holland and England particularly, were thus "frozen out." Seamen of both countries, now and for years later, tried to find a north-west or a north-east passage to the Indies—round the north of North America or of Siberia respectively. Both were found impracticable. The two countries could take a share in the wealth of the Indies or of America only by defying the Papal Edict. Before the middle of the sixteenth century both had broken with the Pope and turned Protestant. The Pope's power was considerable. "But the Pope could not alter geographical (or economic) conditions nor the control exercised by these on the minds of men."² By the end of the century the English had defeated Philip of Spain's Armada, and the Dutch, after throwing off the Spanish yoke, were already establishing themselves at various places in the East and West Indies wrested from the Spaniards and Portuguese. The power of the Mediterranean overlord, the Pope, waned as the importance of the Mediterranean declined.

¹ Semple, p. 13.

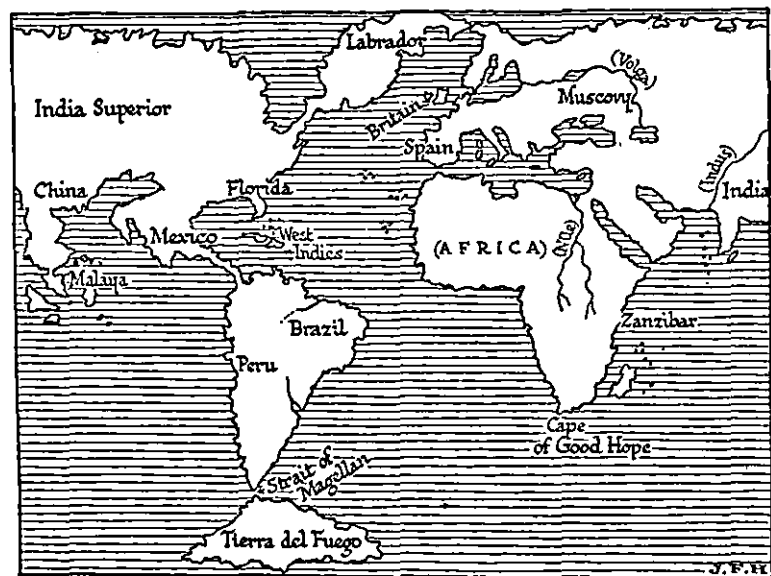
² Fairgrieve, p. 146.

AN OUTLINE OF

The northern nations made the most of another advantage which their geographical location on the open ocean had given them. They had developed a type of ship better suited to ocean-going than the old-type galleys, with a single bank of oars, which had been the characteristic ships of the Mediterranean. Spain (with a partly Mediterranean coastline) was more conservative.

The Beginning of British Supremacy

of ship better suited to ocean-going than the old-type galleys, with a single bank of oars, which had been the characteristic ships of the Mediterranean. Spain (with



MAP 20.—The World, according to a map printed in 1548. Note that, even a quarter of a century after Magellan's voyage, it was still thought that North America was joined to the mainland of Asia; there was as yet no realisation that America was a separate and distinct continent and that the Pacific extended northwards right up to the Arctic. But apart from this error—and the absence of Australia—the map begins to bear some resemblance to actual facts. (Compare this map with No. 21.)

The Armada itself contained a large proportion of old-fashioned galleys. "And that great expedition was out-manceuvred and out-gunned by a fleet superior in numbers (English 197 ships, Spanish 132), vastly handier, and manned and commanded by seamen who had gained their experience,

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

not in the restricted waters of the Mediterranean, but on the ocean highways of the world."¹

The next century saw the great struggle between Dutch and English bourgeoisies for control of the ocean routes; with a third north-west European country—France—intervening now on one side, now on the other. As an ample illustration of the way in which the "ends of the earth" were now being linked up (linked up—chained, indeed, almost literally) to the States of north-west Europe, read this single passage with a map at your elbow:—

At the zenith of their power a few years later (*i.e.*, about the middle of the seventeenth century) the Dutch were supreme in the East Indies; they had settlements in Brazil and Guiana. . . . They possessed trading stations on the coast of Guinea; they had settlements at Cape Town on the way to the Indies; Mauritius (called after their own Prince Maurice) and Ceylon were theirs; and they held the key to the entrance of North America at New Amsterdam (later, New York).²

By the beginning of the eighteenth century Britain had taken Holland's place as "waggoner of the seas"—and as controller of the key-points on the ocean routes of the world. "England," as one writer proudly puts it, "came out of the wars in condition to expand her sea trade with increasing vigour. She was ready to continue around the Seven Seas the work which the Phœnicians, Greeks, and Venetians had done along shore in the Mediterranean."³ And this, of course, was not due to a beneficent Providence having made Englishmen out of superior clay to Dutchmen and Frenchmen, but in the first place to Britain's advantageous geographical position in relation to the Atlantic routes; and, secondly, to the fact that her agriculture and manufactures provided a much more substantial support for her shipping ventures than did those of her rivals. Before the end of the century the Industrial Revolution had begun; and then again Britain's natural resources of coal and iron, and the position of these near to good ports, gave her a still longer lead over other nations, and completed the foundations of her world-supremacy during the nineteenth century.

During the three centuries which followed the ocean

¹ Kermack, "The Expansion of Britain," p. 16.

² Fairgrieve, p. 151.

³ Spears, "Master Mariners," p. 194.

AN OUTLINE OF

discoveries at the end of the fifteenth, the work of exploring—and exploiting—every corner of the Seven
Opening-Up Seas went on. We have already mentioned the
the World's attempts of Dutch and English seamen to
Coasts find a north-west or a north-east passage to Asia. These, though unsuccessful in their primary object, opened up the coast of North America and established trade relations between Britain and Russia. First Portuguese, then, later, Dutch and English, were sailing round all the coasts of Asia. A Portuguese captain first touched Australia early in the seventeenth century. A Dutchman, Tasman, discovered Tasmania and New Zealand in 1642. Cook, the Englishman, first touched several of the islands of the Pacific, including Hawaii, during the eighteenth century. There were fewer and fewer blank places or vague lines on the map of the world.

We have travelled a long way from the ancient world of the Mediterranean in this chapter. We have seen European men make the great stride forward which brought *all the coasts of the world* into touch with each other. And though nation still struggled with nation for the lion's share of the profits of this economic interdependence, they were yet perforce laying the foundations for the world federation of peoples which must sooner or later be built on that material basis. We have still to notice one other step forward—the development of *land transport*—which during the nineteenth century was to carry yet further this economic unification of the world, and to bring into the world-picture not only the *coasts*, but the great *inland areas* which had previously been untouched by civilisation.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER V

WORLD HISTORY : (4) LAND TRANSPORT

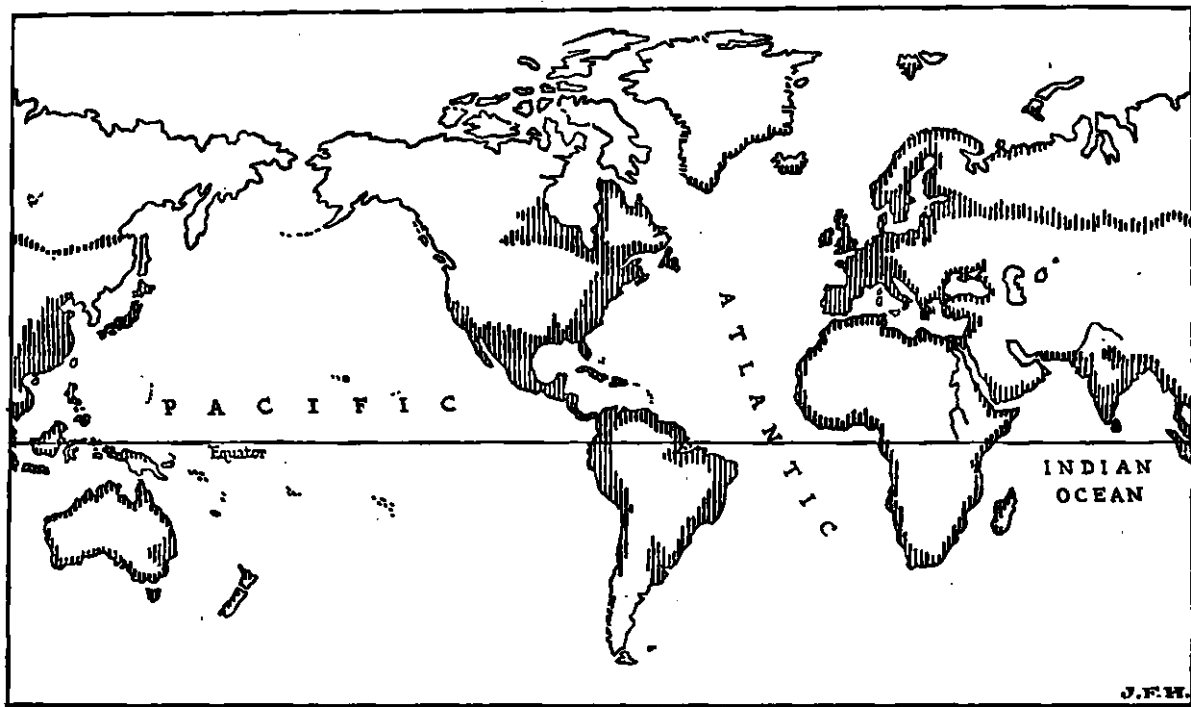
THE final stage in the gradual progress towards world economic interdependence—the stage, note, which completed the material basis for world organisations, of capitalists or of workers—was the development of the means of mechanical *land transport* during the nineteenth century.¹

The means of transport by land had changed hardly at all from the earliest Mediterranean days down to the end of the eighteenth century A.D. There was no essential difference between the chariot of the barbarians who poured into the Mediterranean world three thousand years ago and the stage coach which was the main vehicle of passenger conveyance in Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century. In certain respects, indeed, there had been retrogression rather than progress; the roads which the Romans made were almost certainly superior to anything in that line achieved by later generations, right down to the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The new era of land transport began, of course, with the use of steam-power.

The reason for the revolutionary effect of the steam engine is to be found in the fact that it provides a power [relatively] independent of climate or geography which can be applied to an infinite number of different purposes. It can be used to pump mines, drive machinery in factories, work mills, dig tunnels, build houses, construct dams, empty ships, haul masses of goods from place to place, or cross oceans, deserts, or mountains. . . . From England it spread to the Continent with greater or less rapidity . . . after 1815, and gained fresh conquests by proving itself the effective power of rapid transport during that century. Prior to the introduction of steam . . . man was hemmed in by mountain barriers and deserts, and

¹ Coupled with this, of course, was the application of mechanical power to ships, which meant a tremendous increase of man's control over the ocean. But we have concentrated on land transport in this chapter since this was comparatively a new victory, whilst steamships were but an extension and consolidation, so to speak, of a power over Nature already gained.



MAP 21.—Coasts and areas "opened up," colonised, or brought into communication with the main centres of economic development in North-west Europe by the beginning of the nineteenth century (i.e., before the coming of railways). (China and Japan are included, although of course they kept their gates closed against the foreigner until later in the century.)

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

limited by climatic conditions and sheer distance. The steam engine enabled him to surmount these phenomena and became the great instrument of his control over Nature.¹

By the close of the nineteenth century, man was not only more effectually master of the oceans than he had been before; he was also master of those great unbroken land masses which had previously remained outside the sphere of civilisation. And he had also reduced distances in countries with any sort of road system to about one-tenth of what they had been (measured by time).

Now this development of land transport by means of railways had two important effects. It "opened-up" vast continental areas whose coasts alone had previously been brought into communication with the rest of the world, and so began the last stage of world unification. And it also altered the "balance of power" among those States whose industrial development had already gone farthest. Just as the opening-up of the ocean routes during the sixteenth century "shifted the foci" from the Mediterranean and Baltic lands to the countries of the Atlantic sea-board, so the construction of new land routes gave to certain inland countries a new importance; and though, of course, an ocean coast-line remained a valuable asset these new land routes challenged the "monopoly" hitherto possessed by the countries fronting the open ocean.

As examples of the first revolutionary effect—the opening up of great continental areas—we shall glance briefly at Africa, America, and Northern Asia; as examples of the second—the effect of the opening up of inland routes on the development of certain States—at Germany, Russia, and the United States.

Until almost our own day Africa was the Dark Continent. Though, so to speak, history began within its borders—in Egypt—and though from earliest times its

Opening-Up northern shores formed part of the Medi-
the Great terranean world, the greater part of the con-
Land Masses: tinent, all of it, that is, south of the great
(1) Africa Sahara barrier, was entirely unknown to
Europeans until the Portuguese navigators
crept down its coasts and so round to India less than five

¹ Knowles, "Industrial and Commercial Revolutions in Britain during the Nineteenth Century," pp. 5-6.

AN OUTLINE OF

centuries ago. Men crossed an uncharted ocean and discovered a New World; found that the highest type of civilisation there had been outgrown on the shores of the Mediterranean five thousand years before; colonised this New World and set up a civilisation west of the Atlantic which by the end of the nineteenth century ranked in wealth and power with that of Europe—and still “the Africa of the Atlantic slept on.”

This was in part due to the fact that, to Europeans, the African coast was merely the way to India. When the British gained Cape Colony a century ago, its importance to them lay in Asia not in Africa. But there was also a physical-geographical reason for the fact that civilised men had penetrated scarcely at all into the interior of Africa. Africa is a huge plateau, a vast “table mountain,” which slopes rapidly down to sea-level within a short distance of the actual coast. Its rivers, therefore, tumble down a series of great rapids close to their mouths. Now rivers are the natural “ways” inland from a coast line; but the African rivers (excepting only the Nile, whose history as we have seen was different) are for the above reason bolted and barred against the stranger. Not until he has climbed the slopes and reached the top of the plateau, and there re-launched his boat, can he make use of the water-ways; though once he has done this they serve his purpose magnificently. Moreover, the African coast line is relatively unbroken—there are no deep bays or estuaries leading far inland; so men sailed on *by* it instead of turning to break *into* it. And, finally, before the railways came the only means of transport in Africa was the most primitive of all—human portage; for the deadly tsetse-fly killed horses. “Africa lies on the surface of the ocean, a huge torso of a continent, headless, memberless, inert. Here is no diversity of form, no fructifying variety of geographic conditions. Humanity has forgotten to grow in its stationary soil.”¹

But the coming of the Steam Age heralded the age of Imperialism, when the industrial States sought to “open-up” every corner of the earth in their frantic haste to find territories to “develop” and raw materials to exploit. A European atlas of the eighteen-sixties shows Africa as a coastline

¹ Semple, p. 393.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

crowded with place-names and an almost empty interior—rivers ending in sketchy dotted lines, mythical mountains vaguely indicated, and so on.¹ (The interior, of course, was *not* empty either of men or resources; but these, except near the coast and in certain areas on the east into which the Arabs had penetrated, were completely cut off from the world of civilised men.) The scramble for African territory began in the 'eighties. Between 1880–90 nearly half of the whole continent—five million square miles—was annexed by European powers. By the end of the century the process was complete. The map of Africa was a patchwork “painted in European colours.”²

Most of this great game of grab took place before the railways had been actually built. But its results could only be “consolidated” by the rapid construction of key lines. It was only by means of railways that Africa could be made part of the world economy.

North and South America also were, until the coming of the railway, “populated coast-lines” rather than continents. True, in both the rivers provided (ii) **America** more effective internal means of communication than in Africa. But in the north, in Canada, the rivers were blocked by ice during a great part of the year; in the United States they ran mainly north and south (the great Missouri-Mississippi system) and were of little use for cross-continental communication; while in South America the greatest rivers flow through the equatorial belt, just where climatic conditions are most difficult for white men.

It was the railway which “opened-up” Canada. It was the railway which made possible the political unification of so vast a land area as that of the United States. And it was the railway which has made South America a land of great economic possibilities.

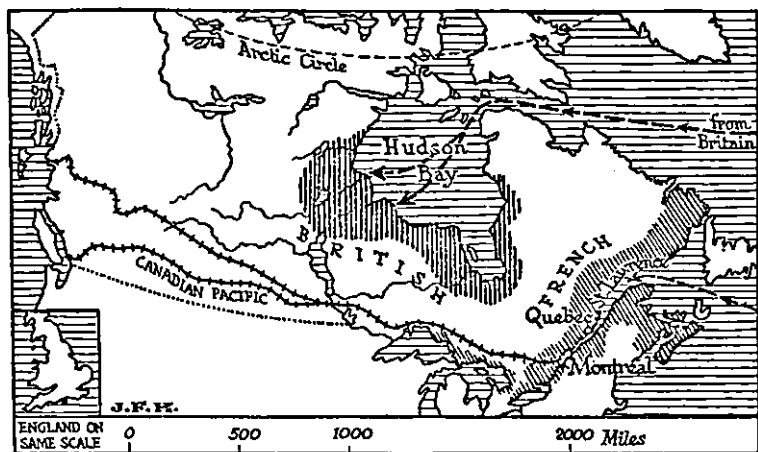
So little was the mere bulk of Canada regarded as an asset, so little was its economic wealth suspected, that “a violent controversy took place in England in 1763 as to whether she should retain Canada or Guadeloupe and

¹Cf. the two comparative maps of Africa in Wells' “Outline of History,” chap. xxxix (reproduced in the Plebs “Outline of Imperialism,” pp. 10-11).

²See Woolf's “Empire and Commerce in Africa,” or his smaller book, “Economic Imperialism”; or Plebs “Outline of Imperialism” for fuller details.

AN OUTLINE OF

Martinique (two minor islands of the West Indies) after the Seven Years War."¹ At that time, and right up to 1860, the way to the Canadian Far West—the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta—was by sea through Hudson Strait into Hudson Bay—when the sea was free of ice—and thence inland by canoe up the rivers. All farther Canada was more accessible by this sea route from England than it was by land from the United States or even from Eastern Canada. It is the railway which has made modern Canada—



MAP 22.—To illustrate the successive stages of the "opening-up" of Canada. The first British territories (those of the Hudson Bay Company) were around the shores of Hudson Bay, reached by sea direct from Britain. The other pioneer settlements in Canada were those of the French, along the St. Lawrence (the second great water opening). These were conquered by the British during the eighteenth century, but not till the building of the railway more than 100 years later could the two areas, and the territories still further west, be linked together.

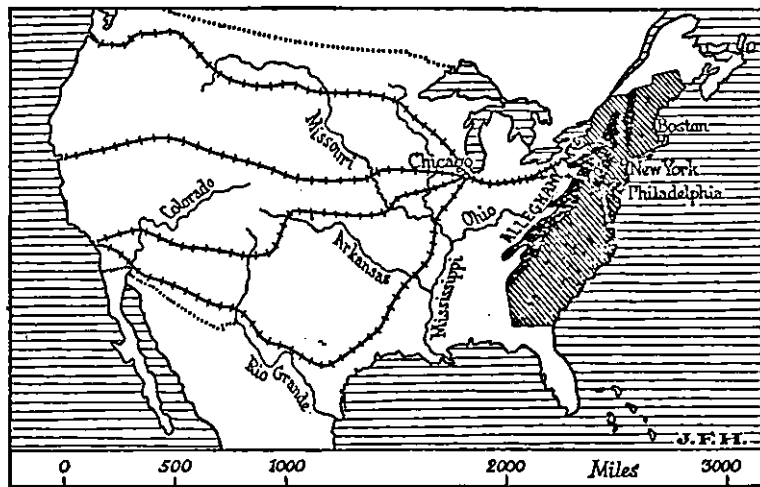
and it is the railway, by the way, which is now linking it ever closer to the United States, the old sea route from Britain having been finally superseded.

Canada's history was in great part a repetition of the history of the United States. The Thirteen Colonies which declared their independence of Britain in 1776 occupied the strip of territory between the Atlantic coast and the Alleghany Mountains. True the French, working down the

¹ Knowles, p. 185.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

St. Lawrence and up the Mississippi and its tributaries, had established more or less isolated posts and forts in the interior. But the United States, then, meant the states touching the Atlantic. The history of the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century is the story of a steady march westwards, first to the Mississippi, then to the Rockies, and finally over the mountains to the Pacific coast.¹ The political unification of this huge area was based



MAP 23.—The territory of the United States. The Thirteen States which declared their independence of Britain in 1776 are shaded. Note how the great trans-continental railroads, after crossing the mountains from the Atlantic coast cities, radiate from Chicago; that city grew up as a railway (and lake) junction.

on its economic interdependence; and this in turn was only made possible by the railways. "To the United States of America, sprawling westward . . . (the railways) meant unity, sustained on a scale that would otherwise have been impossible."²

¹ Cf. the earlier chapters of Scott Nearing's "American Empire." This westward march meant, of course, the conquest and displacement of the native population, which was herded into "Reservations"—usually, as one might expect, not the most desirable pieces of land. One unforeseen result of this policy is worth noting: "Some of these unpromising areas have turned out to be richly oil-bearing. The most conspicuous case is that of the Osagees, who with three hundred and eighty-three families in all, on a reservation in Northern Oklahoma, receive every year from oil leases a sum of approximately two million pounds. They are said to be the wealthiest people *per capita* in the world . . ." (*The Times Literary Supplement*, review of "The Red Man in the United States," by G. E. E. Lindquist).

² Wells, "Outline of History," chapter xxxix.

AN OUTLINE OF

Railways in Europe were for the most part built to connect already existing towns whose position was decided by conditions in the old "horse and road" era. Here and there a Crewe or a Swindon might acquire a new importance as a railroad junction of importance; or the relative importance of neighbouring towns be reversed—as, *e.g.*, in the case of Abingdon and Reading, where the former, situated on the Thames itself (the old highway) gave place to a town through which the main railway line passed. But in America the towns grew up on the railroad routes. "Except on the Atlantic coast, with its old civilisation, railways have not been made to towns because they were important; towns have grown up because railways, following lines of least resistance (geographically speaking), have inevitably met at certain points, such as Chicago, and there rather than elsewhere men have found it convenient to live."¹

So also the great plain of Northern Asia—the ancient home of the nomad peoples—was at length opened up. The Trans-Siberian Railway made a way through (iii) Asia the plain, linking European Russia with the Pacific coast. The Trans-Caucasian and the Trans-Caspian lines opened up the ancient heart of the continent. "India began to be transformed by its railway net, famines lessened, caste tended to break down."² Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and the lands of the Near East generally were (and are) being brought within the area of exploitation by the Bagdad Railway. And the industrialisation of the ancient land of China is being hastened by the laying down of railway lines.

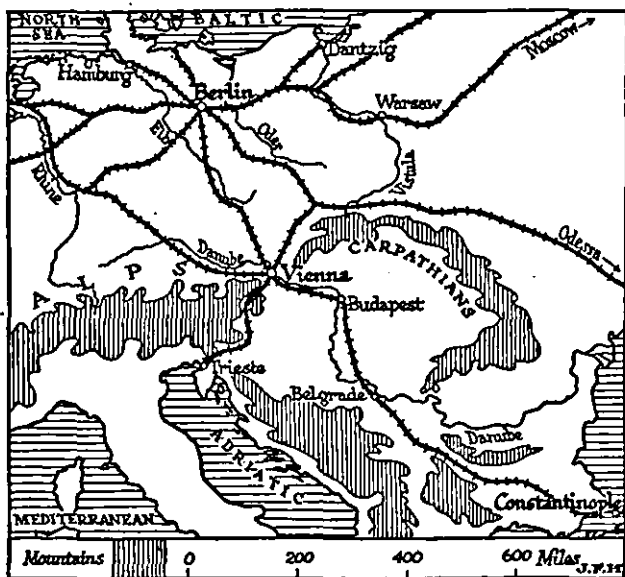
Now, having glanced at the great land areas which were for the first time linked with the rest of the world by means of the railway, let us note how the new land transport influenced the relative importance and of nation-states already in being. We have already seen how the railways laid the foundations of the enormous economic power of a new country, the United States. But within Europe itself they very materially altered the balance

¹ Fairgrieve, p. 326.

² Knowles, p. 187. Cf. also Kermack (p. 59), who points out how the development of railways in India has made possible "the conception of a common Indian nationality."

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

of power between various countries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century "only Great Britain and France could be reckoned as great economic powers; by the end of the century the mediæval countries of Germany and Russia had become modern states." ¹Both countries had previously been hampered by their relatively small coast-line (chiefly or wholly on inland seas) and by the difficulties of land transport. In Russia those difficulties were accentuated by the shortage of stone in the country and the consequent



MAP 24.—The cross-European rail routes which were an important factor in the unification and commercial development of Germany.

impossibility of constructing adequate roads. Both countries were, therefore, at a disadvantage compared with the western European States. But the railway did much to redress the balance. It enabled them to "assemble" their great resources—to bring, *e.g.*, their iron and coal together, and to distribute their food supplies. It made Germany the great commodity-distributor—land-carrier—of Central Europe,² and it gave Russia railway outlets while her sea-ports

¹ Knowles, p. 8. ² Cf. Pavlovitch, "The Foundations of Imperialist Policy," p. 38.

AN OUTLINE OF

were frozen. "Owing to the ease of her sea communications, Britain had before 1870 almost a monopoly of the carriage of goods from northern Europe to the Mediterranean; after that date much of it went by land via Germany."¹ The carrying through of the great German "Mittel-Europa" scheme (smashed by the war), based on a railway route from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf, would have dealt a powerful blow at the British main sea road via the Mediterranean and Suez (cf. Map 34).

It was the railway which at last broke down the frontiers of scores of separate little German states and, as in the case of the United States and India, provided the material basis for political unification. It was the railway, too, which at last made it possible for Russia—the country of the vast inland plain—to become something more than a particularly backward mediæval State. Germany's central position and Russia's vast area could neither be taken advantage of until this new technical step, the development of land transport, had been made. Once it had been made—and Russia, of course, is still only at the beginning—their particular geographical characteristics began to tell.

Civilisation in Europe began in the warm temperate lands of the Mediterranean. The centre was next transferred to the milder temperate lands of the north-west. It may yet—despite the set-back received by Germany and Russia after the war—move eastward to the colder lands of the north and centre.

We have come to the World of To-day; a world which includes every habitable part of the whole globe, and is no longer an "island" of civilisation surrounded by great unknown spaces and liable to invasion by unknown barbarians. We have traced the steady increase of inter-communication and economic interdependence during the centuries—from river valleys to the coast of an inland sea, thence to the ocean coasts of the world, and finally into the heart of all the continents.

World economic interdependence is now an accomplished fact—or rather a *process* which is being intensified every day. When will its inevitable sequel, world political interdependence, be realised?

The workers of the world must give the answer.

¹ Knowles, pp. 187-8.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER VI

THE WORLD TO-DAY

The events accompanying the industrial revolution have hammered the world into a closely knit economic whole, and until this fact is understood, and made the basis of world thought and world building, there can be no permanent solution of the world's problems.

SCOTT NEARING, "The Next Step."

THE most obvious fact about the world of to-day, compared with the world at any previous period, is its *economic interdependence*. Ocean routes and railways have linked, more or less closely, every part of it with every other part; and every part is more or less *dependent* on other parts for vital supplies—of food, or raw materials, or fuels. The old self-supporting estate of feudal times; the practically self-supporting Britain of the eighteenth century—these have gone, along with the chattel slave, the serf, and the guild handicraftsman. A small industrial town like Luton to-day, in the British Midlands, is dependent for the raw material of its staple industry on certain districts of Japan, in the far Pacific. And the British wage-worker's breakfast-table—when he is in "employment" and can afford one—may have on it bread made from wheat grown in America, bacon from the Middle West of the same continent, butter from Denmark or Siberia, and tea from India or China. Within every separate country, too, the same process of "specialisation by districts" has gone on; so that there are agricultural districts and industrial districts, each dependent on the other—areas like South Wales or the Ruhr Valley on the one hand, and wheat-growing East Anglia or East Prussia on the other.

Now this economic interdependence is based on two things :—

- (1) On the tremendous advances in *communication* and *transport*, by land and sea, made since the

AN OUTLINE OF

days when the ocean routes were first opened up four centuries ago.

(2) On the *geographical location* of particular raw materials and soils.

No. (1) we have already glanced at in our preceding chapter; No. (2) we shall discuss from various angles in the remainder of this book. A knowledge of the geographical distribution of vital economic resources is essential to the understanding of the "international" problems of the world of to-day.

The first fact to remember is that "Nature has not scattered coal, iron, copper, or sugar-land over the earth in the same lavish way that she has distributed air and sunshine." These things are localised in particular areas. Certain areas produce far more of a given raw material than they can themselves consume; the surplus is exported to other lands, either entirely destitute or with only inadequate supplies of this material. The world economic system is based on this interchange of products; and there is scarcely any part of the modern world which, if isolated from the rest of the globe, would not instantly have its standard of living in some way lowered, and some, at least, of its industries entirely ruined. Men who had realised that this was "theoretically" true, as well as men who had never given a thought to the matter, learned by actual experience during the Great War that the economic interdependence of the modern world was a hard fact.

But the fact of this economic interdependence is not more apparent than the fact that it is not yet reflected in the *political* organisation of the world. The iron of Lorraine is comparatively useless without the coke of the Ruhr. Water-ways and railroads link ironfields and coalfield together; but an artificial,¹ political frontier line—a frontier, at any rate, which has become an anachronism—divides them. Over

¹ The geographer pure and simple would call any frontier line "artificial" which did not correspond with some *natural* geographical facts. But that is to make of geography a purely abstract study. Its interest to us lies in relating geographical facts to man and his social-economic development. From our point of view, therefore, a frontier line which has evolved from the historical development of two neighbouring peoples is no more artificial than one provided by Nature herself. But both the "natural" frontier and the historically evolved one may become anachronisms in the course of economic development.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

all Europe such frontier lines—very largely drawn in the days of the old self-contained agricultural states—form arbitrary barriers between raw materials and industrial centres, between groups of producers and groups of consumers.

And the ruling class of to-day—the financiers and the big industrialists—use these old political divisions to enrich themselves still further. The idea of nationality, which slowly developed within the borders of independent, self-



MAP 25.—Ruhr coal and Lorraine iron—and the frontier between.

supporting areas, is made use of to aggravate yet more this contradiction of economic interdependence by political frontiers drawn without reference to modern economic needs. So, after the Great War, the empire of Austria-Hungary, which, however much its government stood in need of reform, had grown to be an economic unity, was broken up into "national" areas—each of them lamed from birth, so to speak, through being cut off from one another.¹ Granting

¹ "Where there were approximately eight thousand miles of old boundary about the former States of old Europe, there are now ten thousand miles, and of this total more than three thousand miles represent newly located boundaries. Every additional mile of new boundary has increased for a time the sources of possible trouble between unlike and, in the main, unfriendly peoples."—Bowman, "The New World," p. 3.

AN OUTLINE OF

the reality of national feeling—and if there were no other instances, those of India and Ireland would alone serve to prove that reality—the fact remains that national aspirations in the twentieth century have to be squared with twentieth-century economic needs; and that the sort of patriotism which had a real material basis in the days when agriculture was the predominant industry, and horse-drawn traffic the sole means of land transport, is an anachronism in the days



MAP 26.—The new frontiers in Central Europe.

of coal, iron, and railroads. To-day men are indeed citizens of the world—economically. How they are to become so politically *except by the purposeful action of the workers of the world* is a problem which the opponents of the workers' movement may be left to solve for themselves.

The key, then, to the right understanding of modern "world problems" is a thorough realisation of the funda-

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

mental anachronism in world economy—economic interdependence and political division. We are living in a time of transition, a time when economic developments have gone far ahead of political progress.

Yet economic development—reinforced by the desire of rich and powerful men to grow still richer and more powerful—has forced a certain amount of progress

The Grouping of States in the direction of breaking down political barriers. For what are the political realities

of the world of to-day? Are they the seventy-odd free and independent countries listed in the "Statesman's Year Book" as "sovereign states"—the list in which the Republic of Nicaragua appears alongside the Republic of the United States, and the Empire of Abyssinia alongside the British Empire?

The political realities of the post-war world are not nation-states at all; but groups of nation-states, each dominated by some great industrial power, and each including a greater or lesser number of smaller states or colonies, some probably with de jure independence, but all alike economically (i.e., de facto) dependent on the stronger power.

Precisely the same tendency towards amalgamation—"trustification"—which has been dominant within big national industries for the past quarter of a century has now become discernible in the larger world of nations. Such "amalgamations" have not always received formal political ratification; the Portuguese empire, for instance, has not been formally added to the British; nevertheless Portugal is in cold fact a vassal state of the British group—and so are other countries dependent on Britain for coal or capital or manufactured goods or shipping. One might, indeed, compile a little table of "vassalage," beginning with quite definitely annexed "possessions"—colonies—and working up through "dependencies," "spheres of influence," "mandated territories," "protectorates," and so on, to "ancient and faithful allies"—or "federated autonomous republics." The reality to-day is *the group*, not the separate "sovereign" units.

This tendency is an inevitable result of Imperialism; or, more accurately, of those same economic, technical, and

AN OUTLINE OF

geographical conditions of which Imperialism is the reflection. It was first consciously recognised by those pre-war German writers and politicians who aimed at a "Mittel-Europa," and who saw (or professed to see) in such Economic World Groups a necessary intermediate stage between a world of separate nation-states and the final stage of "the organisation of all mankind—the United States of the World." It was, like many other tendencies, tremendously accelerated by the World War.

Writing only a few months before August, 1914, so well-informed a critic of international affairs as H. N. Brailsford declared:—

In Europe the epoch of conquest is over, and save in the Balkans and perhaps on the fringes of the Austrian and Russian empires, it is as certain as anything in politics can be that the frontiers of our modern national States are finally drawn. If war should break out it will be for some stake in the Near East or in China, and it will end without territorial changes in Europe (the Balkans excluded).¹

Events proved this forecast wrong. The war and the treaties made it apparent that the soil even of Europe itself was by no means sacred to the new Imperialists, and that the frontiers of our modern national States were not strong enough to stand against the new economic forces. It became clear indeed (it is, of course, easy to be wise after the event) that, sooner or later, by war or by peaceful arrangement, these frontiers would have had to be re-drawn in order to bring them into agreement with present-day economic facts. (It is equally clear, of course, that the Treaties of Versailles, &c., did *not* so re-draw them.) Europe, in fact, had ceased to be a "superior" continent—annexing, exploiting, and governing the rest of the world. Industrial powers had grown up elsewhere, in the New World and in the Far East; and the "burden" of empire would, henceforth, be shouldered by the ruling classes (white or otherwise) of those lands which were furthest developed industrially and which possessed the greatest economic resources.

The reality, we have said, is the *group*. Each of the great groups which divide the world of to-day between them is dominated by some great industrial power (or by

¹"The War of Steel and Gold," p. 35.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

a power with the possibility of becoming such); and each aims at making itself as far as possible self-supporting and self-sufficient—*i.e.*, at bringing under its control, direct or indirect :—

- (a) Sufficient supplies of all essential *raw materials*—coal, iron, copper, oil, rubber, cotton, wheat, &c.
- (b) *Markets* for its products and *undeveloped territories* to which its financiers can export capital.
- (c) Land and sea *routes* necessary for the transport and distribution of raw materials and finished goods.

The subject matter of present-day economic geography falls under these three heads—Raw Materials (and their location), “Undeveloped” Territories, and Routes.

What are the great Economic Groups which have taken the place of the old sovereign nation-states, and which have, broadly speaking, partitioned the whole of the world between them?

The Five Great Groups —or, rather, are in course of partitioning—

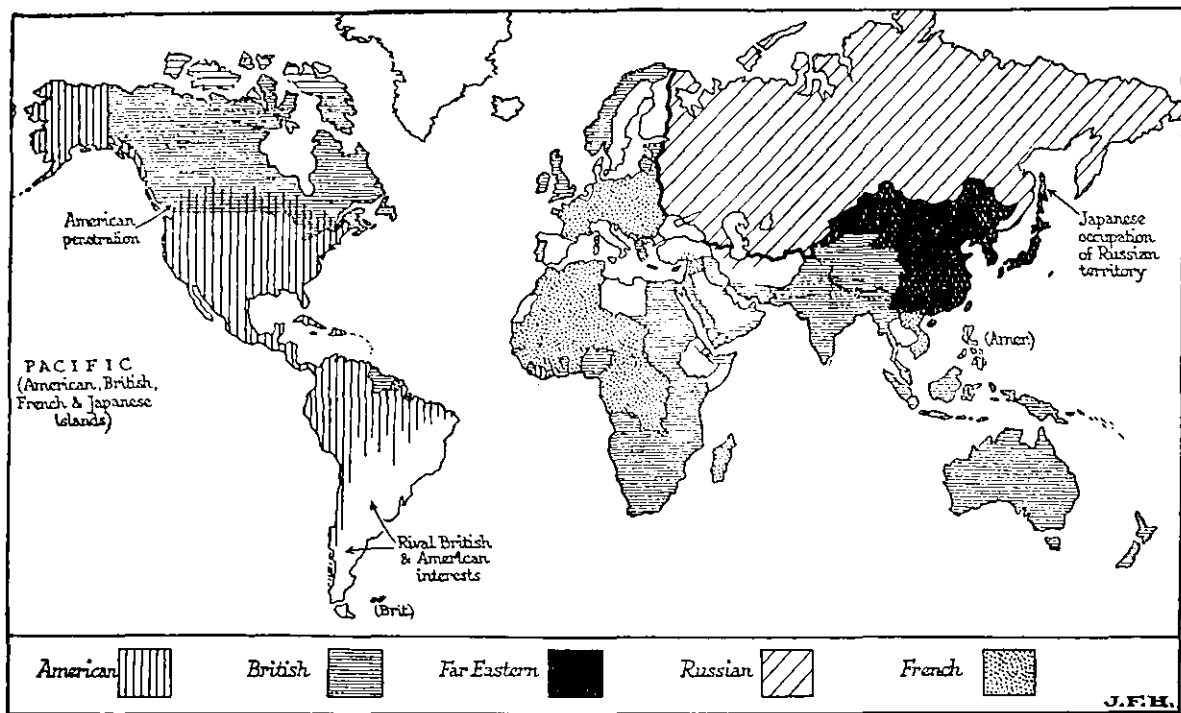
Remembering that this partitioning is not completed, and that there are as yet various minor countries, nominally independent, which are not yet finally and definitely *within* any one of the groups—remembering, that is, that the “edges” of each group are not always yet quite sharp, and that there are still a few “no man’s lands” (or every man’s lands) on their borders—we may put the number of groups at five.

They are :—

- (1) America.
- (2) The British Empire.
- (3) The Far East (China and Japan).
- (4) Russia.
- (5) France, “Mittel Europa,” and Northern Africa.

They are here placed, approximately, in order of importance—bearing in mind their reserve economic resources as well as their actual industrial development to date.

International politics to-day consists of the struggles of these great Groups to strengthen themselves or to weaken one another. These are the Great Powers of the post-war world. The remaining chapters of this book will deal with them, one by one, and attempt to indicate the main facts



MAR 27.—The five Great Groups (see note on opposite page).

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

about each in relation to their control of raw materials and routes, their industrial development, and the territories which each may be considered to include.¹

Let us note here one fact about them which should be borne in mind all through. The real government of each of these groups of states—Russia excepted—is a *group of capitalists*; not always the same group, but always a capitalist group possessing, for the time, the strongest pull over the machinery of government (including the politicians nominally at the head of affairs). Thus, when we speak of “Washington,” or the “Government of the United States,” we are actually referring to the Standard Oil Co., or the Pierpoint Morgan group, or some other section of Wall Street which, at that particular time, is strong enough or interested enough to dictate American policy. When we speak of “France,” at any rate in connection with French foreign policy, we ought really to say “the Comité des Forges.” And the British Government may at one time be the great iron-masters, at another the Royal Dutch-Shell, at another the Big Five Banks and the financiers.

Our business in this book is not to discover and expose the more or less hidden hands pulling the strings of the governmental machinery in this country or that, but to note the territories and resources controlled through the agencies of those machines. But don't let us forget for a moment that the hands are there.

NOTE TO MAP 27.—Only the broad facts of the “grouping” can be indicated in a map on so small a scale as this. A quite accurate map would need a scheme of additional colours or shadings to indicate debatable areas and “friction zones.” In this map the only areas not definitely allotted to one or other of the Great Groups are Sweden, Finland, and Denmark; Spain and the Spanish colonies (though there are probably as good reasons for “colouring” these British as for including Greece in the British group); Italy and the Italian colonies; and Turkey. The Portuguese and Dutch colonies are included in the British Group, and all Central Europe, including Germany, in the French Group. Note, too, that the map is on Mercator's projection, and that therefore the size of Siberia and of Canada is proportionately exaggerated.

¹See also Appendix.

AN OUTLINE OF

CHAPTER VII

THE WORLD TO-DAY: (1) AMERICA

THE historian of a century hence will probably write that the chapter of world-history which began towards the end of the sixteenth century with the defeat of the Spanish Armada by the English fleet, and which will be entitled "British World Supremacy," ended with the Great War of 1914-18. For after that war a new power stepped into the forefront of the picture; a power which a century and a half earlier had been one of Britain's overseas dominions—the United States of America. This new power's supremacy, it will be clearly seen, was by no means due to the more or less accidental sequence of events during the war itself. It was based on factors which would sooner or later have brought about much the same result, whether or not the European States had impoverished themselves by four years of strife and destruction; on vast natural resources and favourable geographical position, and, of course, on a huge scale industrial development commensurate with the size and wealth of the country.

The United States is itself "continental" in area and extent. But it is only a part—the most highly developed part industrially, and the most richly endowed with important raw materials—of the two continents of North and South America. And it is these two continents—the whole New World, in fact—which form the American Group which we placed at the head of the list in our last chapter. America, considered as a whole, is a *geographical unit* more clearly cut, more self-contained, than any of the other great world groups. It is one of the two great islands which form the mass of the land surface of the globe; and despite its size it is, in the age of railways and canals, infinitely more "compact" than the greater Old World. It lies between two oceans—barriers in ancient days, but now highways leading to either side of the Old World. The ordinary Mercator map of the world showing America to the left of the picture needs

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

re-arranging in order to emphasise this essential fact about America to-day. (See Map 8.) "The most important geographical fact in the *past* history of the United States has been their location on the Atlantic opposite Europe; the most important geographical fact in lending a distinctive character to their future history will probably be their location on the Pacific opposite Asia."¹ It would be truer still, surely, to say that the most important fact in lending a distinctive character to future American history will be *its two coastlines*, one on the Atlantic, one on the Pacific. It is this unique position which, in the modern age of rapid ocean transport, gives America an advantage over those countries of north-western Europe which first profited by the opening up of the ocean routes four centuries ago. "Leadership is passing westwards" once again, just as four centuries earlier it had passed from the Mediterranean and the Baltic to the Atlantic. Now the Pacific rivals the Atlantic as "the maritime field of history." And the practical monopoly of the world's carrying trade so long enjoyed by Britain is threatened by the mercantile fleets of the Power with harbours on each of the great oceans, and with control of the short sea way between them—the Panama Canal.

It is not by accident that the leadership of the New World has fallen to the United States. Nor was this in the first place due to the wealth of natural resources in that particular area of America.

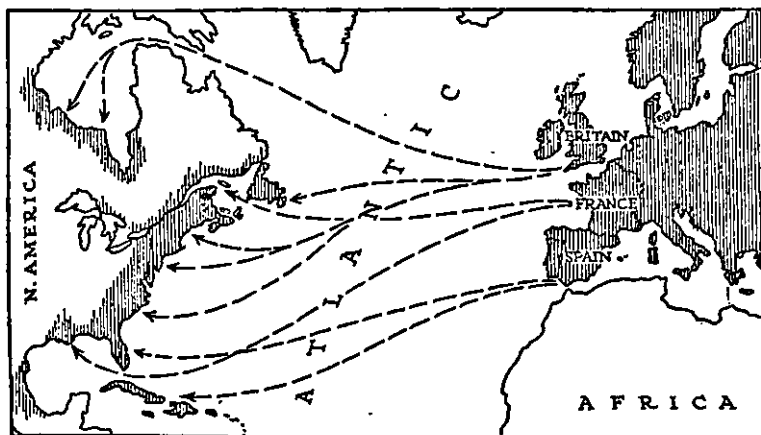
The Development of the United States The first and most obvious reason for the advances made by men of that area is precisely the same as that which encouraged European development tens of centuries before—the fact that this is the part of America which lies in the Temperate Zone. Here Europeans found climatic conditions most nearly akin to those under which their own civilisation had grown up; and here the men of the Atlantic-fronting nations—British, French, and Dutch—made their settlements and laid the foundations of the great Power that was to be.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, as we have already noted in a previous chapter, those settlements lay along the east (Atlantic) coast, from the St. Lawrence

¹ Bemple, "American History and Its Geographical Conditions."

AN OUTLINE OF

mouth to the Gulf of Mexico. They formed a sort of outer edge of European civilisation, linked to Europe by the Atlantic, and having a natural boundary on the west in the mountain ranges which ran parallel to the coast line and which cut them off from the vast land spaces beyond. The foundations of industrial development were laid by means of the iron and the water-power of New England and Pennsylvania. Before the age of land transport arrived these Atlantic states had attained to a degree of economic independence of Europe which enabled them to declare, and preserve, their political independence also.



MAP 28.—North America up to the end of the eighteenth century—the "outer edge of Europe." (N.B.—The dotted lines do not mark actual routes, but merely indicate which part of the American coast the principal European States had colonised.)

Then came the century of the railway, and the United States spread westwards, until at last the Pacific coast itself was reached. East and west, cut off from each other by the Alleghany mountains and by the fact that the great water ways flowed southward, were bound together by the new steel roads. Iron fields were linked with coal fields; the great *grain-growing* area west of the mountains and the grazing lands across the Mississippi sent food to the industrial districts of the north-east and to the cotton lands of the south. By the end of the nineteenth century the capitalist lords of the States, having now "organised" the whole area from

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

the Great Lakes south to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic to Pacific, were looking for fresh fields to conquer. It was in 1898 that the president of the American Bankers' Association declared in his inaugural address at the association's annual convention: "We now hold three of the winning cards in the game for commercial greatness—iron, steel, and coal. We have long been the granary of the world; we now aspire to be its workshop; then we want to be its clearing-house."¹

The Spanish-American War (1898) marks the definite entry of the United States into the ranks of the great Imperialist-industrialist powers.² After that war she secured her control of "the American Mediterranean"—the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean—by establishing what was in effect a protectorate over Cuba and by definitely annexing the island of Porto Rico. This indicated that she was "looking south." At the same time, also, she made it clear that she had an eye on the Pacific by annexing the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii—the former after first supporting and giving guarantees to a Philippine nationalist movement which aimed at independence.³ Five years later she secured strategic control of the Central American isthmus by engineering the revolt of the province of Panama from the Republic of Columbia and securing "general supervision" of the new state and complete rights in the canal zone running across it. She gained control, also, of the alternative canal route, through Nicaragua, by establishing a financial control over that state which amounted to an actual protectorate. And during the Great War, while President Wilson was addressing Notes on Democracy and Freedom to the warring nations of Europe, the troops of the United States forcibly dissolved the parliament of Haiti (the negro republic established on the second largest island of the West

¹ Quoted by Viallate, "Economic Imperialism," p. 33.

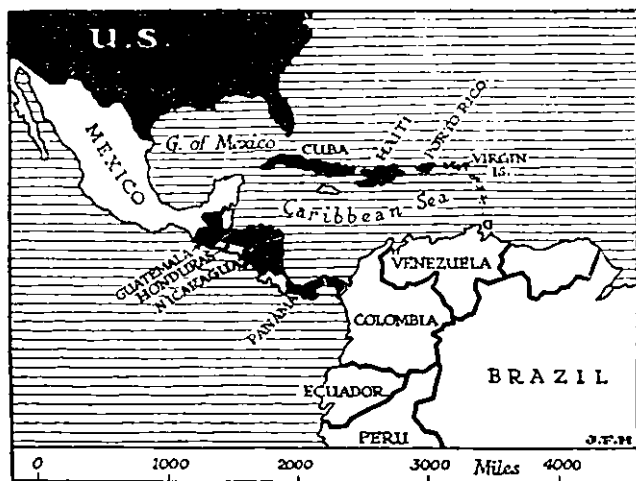
² Though thirty years earlier she had "expanded beyond her natural borders" by purchasing Alaska, in the extreme north-west of North America, from Russia.

³ She has remained in the Philippines ever since—on the usual plea that until the inhabitants are really fit to govern themselves some form of paternal control by a "progressive" State is essential to "stable government." General Leonard Wood, Governor-General of the Islands, addressing the American Chamber of Commerce in Manila, in May, 1923, uttered these memorable words: "The Filipinos are rapidly approaching a stable government, as I define a stable government, namely, a government under which foreign capital invests at ordinary rates of profit."

AN OUTLINE OF

Indies) and instituted a military administration of the customary imperialist kind—to “prevent disorder.”

Since 1898, the United States has secured direct political control over 150,000 square miles of territory with some 9,000,000 of population in Central America and the Caribbean. During the same period she has acquired 120,000 square miles of land in the Pacific. And meantime her capitalists have been busy at the quieter, but not less effective, work of “financial penetration” over yet more extensive areas, in



MAP 29.—United States expansion in Central America. The territories shaded black are those which have since 1898 been brought under direct or indirect control.

the republics of Latin (South) America and in the Dominion of Canada to the north.

But before we consider the relation of the United States with these other great territories of the New World let us note briefly that immense wealth of raw material on which her premier position among them is based.¹

Resources of the United States

Nearly three-fourths of the world's known reserves of *coal* are in North America,

¹ Cf. for figures and estimates, E. C. Eckel, “Coal, Iron, and War”; Scott Nearing, “The Next Step”; U.S. Geological Survey, “World Atlas of Commercial Geology.”

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

and by far the largest part of this (*i.e.*, well over half the total world figure) is within the borders of the United States, which produced 46 per cent. of the world output in 1920.¹ South America is almost without coal; hence her dependence on the United States.

More than a third of the world's reserves of *iron* are located in the United States, and the fourth largest iron field in the world is in Cuba. In 1920 the United States produced 40 per cent. of the world output. (The greatest single iron field in the world is in Brazil, as yet practically untouched owing to the absence of coal and the cost of transportation. The nearest coal is, of course, that of the United States; and when Brazilian iron comes to be worked it will doubtless be by United States coal and United States capital.)

Two-thirds of the world's *petroleum* output came from the United States in 1920. Between 1857 and 1918 she had produced three-fifths of the total world output. But her reserves of oil were estimated (1920) to be little more than one-eighth of the world's remaining resources. Hence her especial interest in Mexico and the Caribbean coast countries of South America, which form the next largest field in the world—situated on her very doorstep. Hence the discovery by her publicists that certain "backward peoples" need the moral and financial support of a more progressive race; the "backward peoples" specifically mentioned being those of Mexico, Venezuela, and the little States of Central America—all of whom live on soil beneath which flows petroleum!

Of *wheat* and *meat* the United States not only produces her own supplies, but has hitherto exported a large surplus. She has long supplied Lancashire with its *cotton*, but is now developing a great textile industry of her own, situated on the very edge of the cotton fields themselves.

It is on this store of natural resources that the United States "hegemony" of the American Group is securely based—a store so rich as to be almost alone sufficient to secure her world hegemony also. But the resources of the rest of America have to be added to hers. What are her relations to these other territories?

¹ It should be borne in mind, however, that we have as yet no accurate data as to the coal and iron reserves of Northern Asia.

AN OUTLINE OF

The only formal political bond between the United States and the States of South America is the Pan-American Union.

Central and South America But this is a somewhat sketchy political expression of what is nevertheless a very real economic relationship. "The whole of the Central and South American continent vibrates when there is an upheaval at Washington."

The entry of the United States into the war was immediately followed by ultimata to Germany from most of the South American States. The Pan-American Union has grown out of the Monroe Doctrine, formulated a century ago as a Republican counterblast to monarchist Europe after the defeat of Napoleon. Then, the Monroe Doctrine meant that the United States would come to the assistance of any American State menaced by a European power and that she stood for the *status quo* in the New World. Now the Monroe Doctrine means that the right of interference with her weaker neighbours, and the privilege of exploiting them, are reserved to the United States. "The Monroe Doctrine has become a statement in economics!"¹ The oil-wells of Central America, and the Caribbean, the wheat and meat of the Argentine, the nitrate beds of Chili, and the mineral wealth of Peru—all these are to be counted as parts of the resources of the American group, for over all these the financial overlords of the United States have set themselves to secure control. This means conflict with British interests, especially in the Argentine, in which so many millions of British capital are invested that it is virtually a British "sphere of influence."² But more and more assiduously American capital is seeking to win the South American markets for United States manufactured goods—from locomotives to small textiles. As an American writer simply yet touchingly puts it: "In a realm so vast as that stretching from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, the home of 20,000,000 people of white blood, of nearly 20,000,000 Indians and negroes, and of 85,000,000 more of mixed blood, it should not surprise us to find problems . . . of paramount interest to the United States."³

¹ Labour Research Department Circular (August, 1920) article "Factors in World Politics."

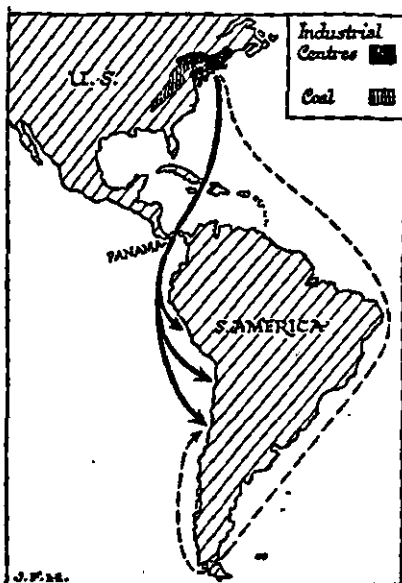
² Cf. Plebs "Outline of Imperialism," p. 147.

³ Bowman, "The New World," p. 559.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Raw materials, markets, unexploited territories; what of routes? By her control of the key route of Panama the United States has enormously strengthened her grip on South America.

The Panama Canal From every point of view the cutting of the canal was vital to her development. As a short cut between the two great oceans it doubled her naval power in each. It brings her own two coasts thousands of miles nearer together, by sea—thus incidentally



MAP 80.—The old and new routes between the industrial centres of the United States and Western South America.

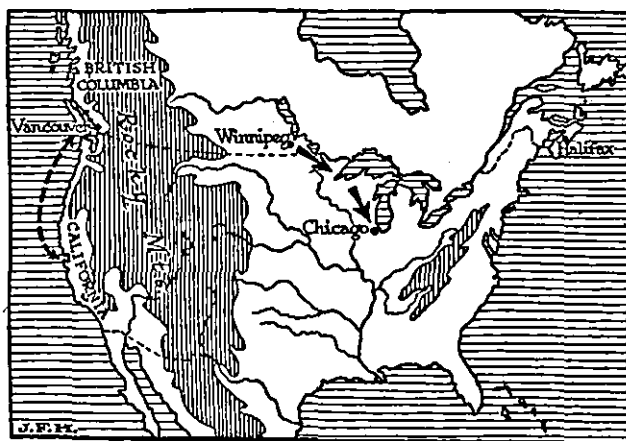
reducing the importance of the (more expensive) trans continental railroads.¹ And it halves the distance between her own industrial centre and the markets of western South America (see Map 80). From New York to Valparaiso, round Cape Horn, is close on 9,000 miles; via Panama it is well under 5,000. It brings these new countries much nearer to the industrial centres of the United States than to

¹ And, it is interesting to note, proportionately weakening the industrial power of the American railway workers.

AN OUTLINE OF

Europe, whereas in pre-canal days the relative distances did not greatly differ. It also enormously reduced the distance between those industrial centres and the ports of Asia. "By the Suez route New York is 2,000 miles farther from Shanghai and Yokohama than is Liverpool. The opening of the Panama route put New York 9,825 miles from Yokohama while Liverpool would remain 11,640 miles distant, and it made both cities equidistant from Shanghai."¹ Small wonder that that far-seeing Imperialist statesman, Theodore Roosevelt, felt himself abundantly justified in "taking the Canal Zone, and letting Congress debate about it afterwards" (his own description of his methods).

What of the northern part of North America, the great territories which still form part of the British Empire—the Dominion of Canada and Newfoundland? How long are these likely to remain members of a rival group system and to stand outside that Pan-American "combine" of which, geographically, they are a part?



MAP 31.—To illustrate the "geographical oneness" of North America, and the absence of any barriers between Canada and the United States. Note that the territories west of the mountains can communicate with each other (by sea) more easily than with the lands to the east; and that Winnipeg and the central wheat-growing areas of Canada are nearer to Chicago than to the Canadian eastern ports.

¹ Viallate, "Economic Imperialism," p. 84.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

It is rash to prophesy; but let us take note of a few salient facts. The financial penetration of Canada by the United States is increasing.¹ Trade between the two countries is obviously easy—in the age of railways. Outlying parts of Canada are nearer to the United States than they are to one another. "British Columbia can trade more easily with California than with Ontario, and Winnipeg is nearer to Chicago than to Vancouver or Halifax."² There is no real frontier of any kind between the two countries—either geographical, or linguistic,³ or of difference in political or economic development. A line of latitude and different colouring on a map are scarcely real barriers. North America, historically, geographically, economically, is one. That in this age of easy inter-communication it can remain politically separated for any long period seems doubtful.

True, Canada forms one link in an all-British round-the-world route—via Atlantic, Canadian Pacific Railway, and so to the Pacific. But that route is second in importance to the British "main road" via Mediterranean and Suez to the East; and if we visualise the British Empire as chiefly centred on that sea road, Canada is seen to be an isolated unit. True, also, air transport via the Arctic would greatly reduce the distance between Western Canada and England—but Canada would still be considerably nearer to the United States. Canada's coal, oil, and wheat, and the iron of Newfoundland, are no inconsiderable items in the wealth of the British Empire; but that fact does not make them any the less desirable to the lords of Wall Street. And if the United States were the aggressor, how could Canada be defended?

To sum up, then, the American Group is the richest of any in all-important raw materials and enjoys the advantage of a particularly favourable geographical position. It is dominated by the greatest single industrial power in the world. That power is extending its economic, if not political, control over every part of the two continents, North and

¹ See articles by H. P. Rathbone, *Labour Monthly*, June and July, 1923.

² Radford, "Industrial and Commercial Geography."

³ The only important linguistic frontier in North America is within Canada itself—that between the French-speaking inhabitants of the old French colonies on the St. Lawrence (cf. Map 22) and the English-speaking people of the rest of the Dominion; and this is a frontier tending rather to divide Canada against itself than to separate it from the United States.

AN OUTLINE OF

South. Moreover, its Pacific coastline gives it a vital interest in the control of that ocean, across which its naval bases form a "far-flung line" reaching to the coast of Asia itself. It is ready to challenge British or Japanese supremacy in the Far East, and may yet add to its own almost illimitable resources the unexploited wealth of China. It is looking for oil-wells in every part of the world. Its "traditions" may still largely be those of early capitalist liberalism. But geographical facts and economic development pay little heed to "traditions"; and they have made the United States the greatest Imperialist power in the age of Imperialism.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORLD TO-DAY: (2) THE BRITISH EMPIRE

THE first and most fundamental fact to note about the British economic Group—the British Empire and certain dependent states—is the fact that it is not, as are all the other groups to a greater or less extent, a geographical unit. British possessions and dependencies are scattered over all the Seven Seas. Only Geographical the ocean links them together. The British Dis-unity Empire is therefore based on sea-power, and can only remain a unity—in a world of rival imperialisms—so long as her sea-power is supreme.

This position is not materially altered by man's latest technical achievement (not so far discussed in this book)—air transport. Air routes for the most part follow land routes (river valleys, &c.) and they cross seas, for obvious reasons, only where these are unavoidable. Moreover, air transport is more affected by atmospheric conditions, weather variations, &c., than are railways or even steamships. Disconnected territories, therefore, cannot be permanently linked by air-power, since routes in war-time would probably lie across enemy countries. While if any attempt were made (as has actually been suggested) to make air routes across seas or oceans practicable by constructing floating landing-stages, these, it is clear, could only be protected by sea-power. The development of air transport will, on the other hand, probably result in the still closer unification of great land areas, like Russia and the United States.

A glance back at the history of British expansion will suffice to explain why the Empire is made up of a large number of scattered parts. Britain's rise to Sea Power and Sea Routes world power came after the opening up of the ocean routes in the sixteenth century, and was based on her own advantageous position on the Atlantic front of Europe. She succeeded, in the course of the following century, in gaining for herself the carrying trade of the whole world. In every part of

AN OUTLINE OF

the globe, therefore, she established trading stations and ports of call. Her aim was to secure her trade routes—the long sea lanes along which her merchant ships went laden with cargoes. Extent of territory was unnecessary, was indeed to be avoided. What she needed was control of key points on vital routes. We have already noted (Chap. V) that two minor islands of the West Indies were by many eighteenth-century English commercial men considered to outweigh in importance the whole of Canada. This was because the West Indian islands, in the days of sailing-ships, commanded the main route from Europe to all the American ports; the course lay by the Trade Winds southwest to the West Indies, and thence along the coast north or south. Hence Jamaica, Bermuda, and Barbadoes were among the earliest of British acquisitions. On another route, too, as we have noted, the Cape of Good Hope was important solely as commanding the way to India. Where Britain did actually acquire any extent of territory, *i.e.*, in India and Canada, it was largely because she had to fight for any foothold at all there against her rival, France; and, to secure her position, she had to take possession of wide areas. These, with her North American colonies—important because from these she drew the materials for ship-building—were practically the only British land possessions up to the end of the eighteenth century.

Out of these trading-stations and ports of call grew, during the nineteenth century, the British Empire. Between 1800 and 1850 the area of the Empire was trebled. By 1919 (after the Great War) it had trebled again, totalling 13,700,000 square miles, with a population of 475 millions—more than a quarter of the land surface and population of the world. This enormous increase followed on the greater ocean control which was man's when the steamship came. Just as the United States and Russia are essentially *railway* states, so the British Empire of to-day is, in H. G. Wells' phrase, a *steamship empire*.

Now this far and wide scattering of the various parts of the empire means a tremendous complication of internal racial, religious, political, and commercial problems.¹ It

¹ 319 millions out of the 475 millions are Indians, and millions more are Africans. The United States has a larger white population than the British Empire.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

means also that scarcely anything can happen in any part of the globe without its reacting more or less directly on British interests somewhere. And the whole Group stands or falls by sea-power and open sea communications. That is the British Achilles' heel.

The dominant power—as yet—in the Group is, of course, Great Britain. After the Industrial Revolution, Britain not merely *carried* the trade of the world, but was herself the world's chief trader. Her ships carried her coal and her manufactured goods over all the seas. And not only had she great reserves of coal, but these had the additional advantage of being located near to the coast—a fact which gave her a long start, before the days of land transport, over countries with inland coalfields. The nineteenth century saw the zenith of her power, when her capitalists, secure in the possession of her resources, her shipping, and her command of trade routes, asked only for universal Free Trade as the condition of British supremacy everywhere.

Her population was concentrated in the mining and industrial areas, and she became more and more dependent for her food supplies on overseas countries. Agricultural workers in England are but 6 per cent. of the population, as compared with 40 per cent. in France and 72 per cent. in Russia. "The people of the British Isles live in dense agglomerations, and their welfare is bound up with coal, iron, and steel, and the freedom of sea routes."¹ (Cf. Map 82.)

The various parts of the Empire may be conveniently grouped, as Morgan ("The New World," p. 29) groups them, into:—

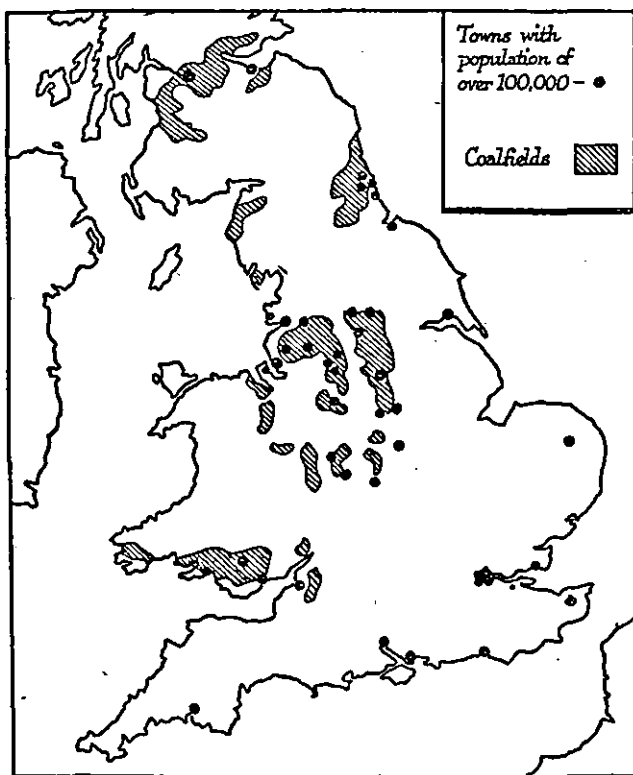
1. The five self-governing dominions—Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, and Newfoundland. These, note, are each capitalist nations, with interests of their own not necessarily identical with those of the "mother" country.² "Natives," except in South Africa, are in the minority and capitalists and wage-slaves are alike whites.

¹ Bowman, "The New World," p. 16.

² It is the pressure of economic development, and not mere rhetoric, which makes British politicians and the British press inclined nowadays to use the term British "Commonwealth of Nations" in preference to British "Empire."

AN OUTLINE OF

2. "Possessions" like India, Egypt, the Sudan, East Africa, or Mesopotamia—some called protectorates, some dependencies, some mandatory territories—where Britain governs "subject races" of varying stages of civilisation. Some of



MAP 32.—Showing towns with 100,000 or more inhabitants, and coalfields, in Great Britain. Note how the majority of the towns are situated in or on the borders of the coalfields; while of those not so placed the majority are seaports.

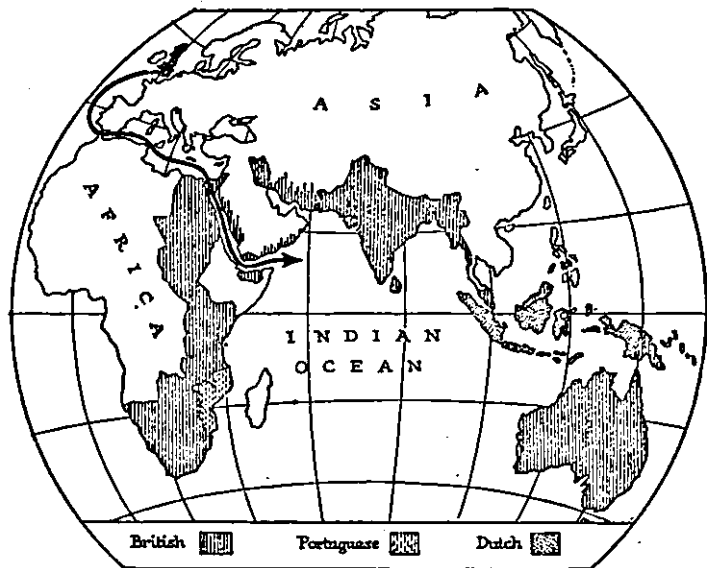
these, also, *e.g.*, India and Egypt, are developing capitalist systems and capitalist classes of their own.

8. Naval stations and strategic key points like Gibraltar, Aden, and Singapore.

To these we must add, as parts of the British Group, though not, politically, parts of the British Empire, such

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

dependent states as Portugal and the Portuguese colonies; the Argentine (see previous chapter); and the Dutch East Indies, linked to Britain by the Royal Dutch-Shell Oil combine, and "commanded" strategically by British Singapore and Australia. Norway, too, is closely bound to Britain by shipping interests as well as geographical position; while Greece receives various sorts of preferential treatment in return for supporting British interests in the Mediterranean.



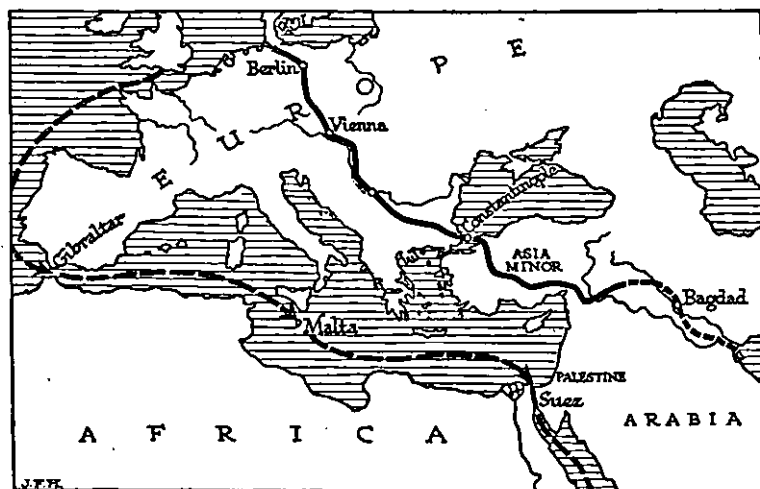
MAP 33.—The Indian Ocean possessions of the British Group, and the sea way thither from Britain.

Yet though the British dominions are still widely scattered, the events of the past few years have tended to concentrate the main British interests in one great area—the Indian Ocean—and on the main sea road thither from Europe. Four centuries ago the Indian Ocean was a Portuguese lake. To-day it is a British one. Britain's acquisitions of territory after the war almost completed the ring of her possessions round its shores. All the east coast of Africa save two

AN OUTLINE OF

areas (and one of these is Portuguese) is now British. Then come Aden (guarding the Red Sea gate), Arabia, and the Persian Gulf (leading to Mesopotamia and Persia). Then India itself—most priceless of all British possessions—Burma, and the Straits Settlements (leading to Hong Kong and the East Indies); and finally Australia.

Here, surrounding one ocean, is a group of territories which in wealth of raw materials and as markets for the products of an industrial power would alone constitute an "empire" of the first rank. The advantages—in naval



MAP 34.—The British sea way to India and the East, and the German Berlin-Bagdad overland scheme.

security and otherwise—of a concentration of British interests are obvious; and such a concentration is encouraged by growing American rivalry in the Atlantic and Pacific spheres, while in the Indian Ocean Britain possesses a virtual monopoly. The equally obvious disadvantage of this concentration is that this group of territories lies thousands of miles away from Britain herself, the industrial and financial centre of the group, and is linked with her only by a long sea road—whose control accordingly becomes a matter of vital moment.

That sea road is, of course, the Mediterranean—Suez—Red Sea route. Once again, after the lapse of four centuries,

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

the Mediterranean—thanks to the technical development which enabled men to cut a canal through the Suez isthmus—comes into the forefront of the world picture. And a realisation of the importance of this route makes understanding of the main aims of British international policy easy. This was the route threatened by the German scheme of a Berlin-Bagdad railway—an overland route from north-west Europe to the shore of the Indian Ocean (see Map 84); and the after-war “settlement” of Europe—the break-up of Austria and Turkey into smaller states and the aggrandisement of Greece—was in part dictated by the need, on Britain’s part, to push any such scheme out of the sphere of practical politics. It is the safeguarding of this route, as well as the oil of Persia and Mesopotamia, which dictates Britain’s vital interest in the whole “Near Eastern question.” The lands flanking that road must be brought and kept, directly or indirectly, under British control. The question who shall occupy Constantinople becomes a matter of British concern, for Constantinople is one of the gateways of the Mediterranean, and the British “road” runs through that sea. Above all, any real independence for Egypt is out of the question; for Egypt commands Suez—the key position of the whole route—and the United States could as safely permit, let us say, Japan to establish herself on one bank of the Panama Canal as Britain see another power gain a foothold in Egypt. Peoples who want independence in the modern world should take care not to live in places commanding world trade routes—like Egypt or Ireland (unless, like the Turks, they can succeed in playing off against one another the jealousies of rival groups).

We have remarked that Britain’s scattered territories and world-wide interests make for numerous causes of conflict between her and rival groups. Study Zones of of a world political map will at once reveal Friction some of these. Her vital interests in the Mediterranean route, for example—safeguarded by her possessions of Gibraltar and Suez, and the “half-way house” of Malta—means antagonism to France; for France also (as we shall note again later) needs to be supreme in the Mediterranean in order to ensure the safety of the link binding her European with her African territories. The

AN OUTLINE OF

British road, running east and west, crosses the French road, running north and south. And where roads cross, interests cross—especially where the only policeman on point duty is a puppet called a League of Nations!

We have already noted that the markets of South America are likely to become an acute cause of conflict between Britain and the United States; and we have noted the position of Canada. Economic-geographic facts provide "zones of friction" in plenty between the British Empire and the other two great world groups, Japan and Russia. The former, looking across the Pacific east and south, sees the coasts of Canada and Australia, as well as of the United States, "Reserved for White Men"; and her dreams of Asia for the Asiatics is shattered by the British occupation of India, to say nothing of the British interests in China. Russia, seeking an open gateway from her Black Sea ports into the Mediterranean, finds the way barred by British intrigue; while her very geographical location on the borders of those Near Eastern lands leading to India—so precious to Britain—is a permanent threat to British security. The British Empire is often declared by enthusiasts to be a mighty asset for world peace. But, in a world constituted as ours is to-day, its geography provides not a few seeds of future wars.

As was inevitable in discussing the British Empire, we have said a good deal about routes. It remains to note a few primary facts about the British Empire's wealth of raw materials. The industrial —and might of the Empire was built up on the large Relative and easily accessible supplies of coal and iron Decline of in Great Britain itself. The first fact to Great Britain note is that those supplies are *relatively* declining. During the years immediately before the Great War, Britain, as an iron, steel, and coal producing nation, had fallen to third place among the countries of the world. Her production had not actually declined; but the production of other countries had increased enormously. E. C. Eckel's estimate ("Coal, Iron, and War") of British coal reserves is 190 thousand million tons, or just over 4 per cent. of the world's reserves (as compared with the United States 50 per cent., and Central

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Europe's 10 per cent.—most of this latter now directly or indirectly controlled by France). And Britain's remaining coal is not so accessible, and therefore not so cheap, as formerly.¹ But the Empire still possesses very large coal supplies in Canada and Australia (both these easily accessible for water shipment), and there is coal too in South Africa, New Zealand, and India.

The fact that Great Britain's remaining coal is less accessible than formerly will also react on her iron production. She has still ample resources of iron-ore. But "people do not make iron simply to use up the ores; and with an increasing coke cost and a narrowing export market it is a very serious question whether the bulk of these British carbonates will ever be used. The duration of the British steel industry will be fixed by its coal supply and not by its supply of local ores."²

These facts point to a relative decline of Great Britain's ascendancy as compared with other parts of the Empire. For it was on her coal export, first and foremost, that the British industrial system was built up. "Coal is the export ballast that makes British import trade possible"—both in raw materials and foodstuffs. (It was this fact that made the late Lord Rhondda an enthusiastic advocate of the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, for, with additional iron to be worked, France's coal shortage would be still more acute, and South Wales' opportunities proportionately increased; and the same fact made him equally enthusiastically opposed to the cession of any coalfields to France—in the Saar or anywhere else. Had his lordship been spared to see the French occupation of the Ruhr he would probably have died of a broken heart.)

But a decline in the economic and industrial position of Great Britain herself as compared with her dominions would not necessarily mean any decline in the strength of the Empire as a whole compared to other groups—so long at any rate as the interests of the various parts of the Empire coincided sufficiently to hold the whole together. Capitalist nations, however, tend to develop rival interests pretty

¹ The known extension of the Yorks-Notts field into Lincolnshire, which is to be opened up in the near future, is scarcely important enough to affect the general truth of this statement.

² E. C. Eckel, "Iron Ores, Their Occurrence, Valuation, and Control."

AN OUTLINE OF

rapidly; and there is perhaps less probability of their remaining a "combine" where three or four of them are roughly equal in strength than where, as in the case of America, the group is headed by a single power as strong as the rest put together.

As regards *food*, the Empire can be self-supporting. Great Britain herself depends on imports for more than two-thirds of the food required by her huge industrial population. The Dominions can produce this food. But cost of transport—the price of geographical disunity!—and other factors make this only practicable if Britain institutes a system of tariffs directed against food imports, from other non-British, areas. This question becomes accordingly a major question in British "home politics."

In regard to one *vital* raw material the British Empire vastly improved its position as a result of the after-war settlement, viz., its oil supplies. Previously, it had mainly relied on financial control of deposits in Mexico, Russia, and Rumania, and on imports from the United States. In 1917, the Empire possessed actual territorial control of only 2 per cent. of the world's petroleum output. But the acquisition of the Persian-Mesopotamian field has to a great extent redressed the balance. That field is probably, after the Carribean, the richest yet to be worked in the world. "The Mesopotamian campaign," writes Eckel, "was the one sound commercial enterprise of the World War." And, in addition, the Royal Dutch-Shell combine adds to the oil resources of the Empire the wells of the Dutch East Indies, as well as large holdings in the Caribbean field—Mexico, Venezuela, and Trinidad (*i.e.*, inside the American "sphere").

To balance this success, however, British industry suffered a heavy setback after the War (and the Peace) by the loss of the markets of Germany and Central Europe, and the emergence of France as a potentially far more formidable industrial rival than even Germany had been. It is highly questionable whether, within the territories of the British Empire itself, any possible extension and development of markets can compensate for this loss. And even if the markets could be brought into existence, Britain's distance from them would be a permanent disadvantage—the price of geographical disunity once again!

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

So far as actual possessions are concerned, the British Empire has increased in wealth and strength since the war. In Africa and the Near East it added hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory to its possessions—though this, it must be remembered, meant adding at the same time to its problems of internal and external relations. The Dominions—though Australia in particular is hampered by its distance from the main trade routes—are becoming industrial powers, even though Great Britain herself is becoming relatively less important. In organisation, in total resources of raw materials, and in command of unexploited territories the British group still ranks as second only to the American. And though the days of British world supremacy are ending, the British section of the world workers' movement has still the responsibility of carrying on the offensive against one of the strongest fortresses of capitalism. Whether it can most effectively do this by shaping its policy in the direction of the "socialisation" of the Empire built up by British capitalists, or by working instead with the proletarian movements of France and Germany for the realisation of a Workers' United States of Europe, is one of the most vitally urgent questions confronting it to-day.

AN OUTLINE OF

CHAPTER IX

THE WORLD TO-DAY : (8) THE FAR EAST

WE have seen, in the course of our survey of world history, how, since the opening of the sixteenth century, the superior technique of the men of Europe, particularly North-Western Europe, has enabled them to penetrate to, and ultimately to dominate, almost every part of the globe; so that a map showing the “possessions” and “spheres of influence” of the European states, including the lands (including America) colonised by men of European stock, has very few blank spaces denoting “independent” areas. By far the largest and most important of these blank spaces—indeed the only one of world importance—is that in the Far East of Asia: the great mass of China, the peninsula of Korea, and the neighbouring islands of Japan.

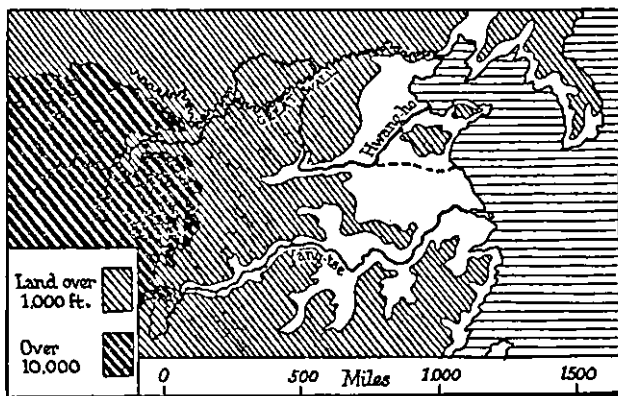
Here, in the river valleys of China, there grew up—later than in the valleys of the Nile and Tigris and Euphrates, but close on 2,000 years before Rome completed the unification of the Mediterranean area—a civilisation and organisation based, as were those others, on agriculture and horticulture and on the more and more effective use of irrigation. “Dig the bed deep, keep the banks low” was the motto of one of China’s engineer heroes who flourished before the Christian era; and throughout the centuries his advice has been followed—the stone dikes kept low enough to permit of sufficient flooding for fertilising the valleys; the river channels regularly cleared of mud and silt. Moreover, as the population grew, cultivation climbed from the low-lying river lands far up the hillsides bordering them, up a series of terraces often carried to the very foot of vertical cliffs.

The fertility of the lands so watered; the “natural protection” which the mountain masses to the west and north and the ocean to the east afforded; and the seclusion of the country as a whole, far removed from all the other main centres of civilisation, all these geographical factors led to the practically uninterrupted development of a

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

civilisation peculiarly rooted in a particular set of conditions, and unaffected for centuries by any influences whatever from the outer world.

This seclusion, as we have already noted in an earlier chapter, led to the same kind of stagnation which characterised Egypt after the earliest centuries. Men had completely mastered the particular problems which nature had set them, and no incentive from outside, no contact with peoples facing other and different problems, came to stimulate progress in any new direction. The invaders who at intervals swept down into the valley lands of China—



MAP 35.—The two great river valleys of China and the plain between. (From the thirteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, the course of the Hwang-ho was as shown by the dotted line.)

barbarian nomads from the great barren highlands of Northern and Central Asia—were, even when they were strong enough and well enough organised to “conquer” the country and make themselves into ruling dynasties, numerically insignificant compared to the dense masses of populations which the intensively cultivated lands supported; and their intrusion never in any way affected the social or economic life of the country.

We may note again¹ one other geographical fact which helped to make China self-centred before passing on to consider her position in relation to the capitalist-imperialist

¹ Cf. Chapter III.

AN OUTLINE OF

world of to-day ; the fact that her rivers empty themselves into the open ocean, and not, like the Nile and the rivers of Mesopotamia, into sheltered seas which served, as we have seen, as nurseries for seamen. The Chinese accordingly never took the " next step "—from river transport to sea navigation—because in their case that step was too difficult. And it was, therefore, the seamen of the west, schooled in the Mediterranean, who at length mastered the art and science of ocean navigation and sailed to the coasts of China ; and not the—in many respects—more highly civilised Chinese who sailed forth to discover the coasts of the western world.

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French merchant seamen competed for such strictly limited trade as the Chinese were willing to carry on with the outer world. Not until the coming of the steamship age, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was the " opening-up " of China really begun. It was Britain, the world's chief carrier and trader, which took the lead in this process, after the Opium War (1840) establishing herself at Hong Kong, and using her monopoly of the opium produced in her Indian territories as a basis for developing trade with China in all kinds of commodities and raw materials. By various treaties certain ports on the Chinese coast were opened to Europeans ; and in 1854 Japan, too—whose civilisation derived from China—was compelled to renounce her policy of isolation and open her gates to the foreign merchant.

In these earlier days it was *trade* with China's teeming millions that the industrial states of Europe sought after.

But when the imperialist stage of capitalism was reached it was her great mineral resources, **Unexploited Resources** and the magnificent opportunities she offered for railway concessions and engineering works, which attracted them. The ignorant Chinaman had cultivated his garden and entirely ignored the coal seams below it. And these coal seams were magnificent indeed ! The coal reserves of China are the largest, outside the United States, of any country in the world, forming about a quarter of the total world reserves. Much of the coal is of the very first quality ; and, further, some of the richest fields are near the coast, export being, therefore, easy.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Besides coal, China has iron—though what total quantity is uncertain. “There is between fifty and one hundred million tons of known ore, containing an average of 65 per cent. of iron, in the Shantung peninsula.”¹ She is the world’s largest producer of antimony; and she has considerable deposits of tin, lead, and oil. She is the third largest producer of raw cotton. And she possesses, finally, enormous quantities of that attractive raw material—cheap human labour-power. “The standard of life is very low. Ten shillings will keep a family for a month.”²

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Imperialist powers, though not strong enough individually nor sufficiently united to take possession of China herself, pressed in closer and closer on the country by establishing themselves in all the outer provinces and neighbouring territories. The French, by a series of annexations, occupied all Indo-China to the south; Britain took Upper Burma and (in the early years of the present century) established a virtual protectorate over Tibet; in the north, Russia advanced steadily towards an open sea-port and began to “penetrate” Manchuria; while after the war with Spain the United States seized the Philippines, only a few hundred miles from the Chinese south-eastern ports.

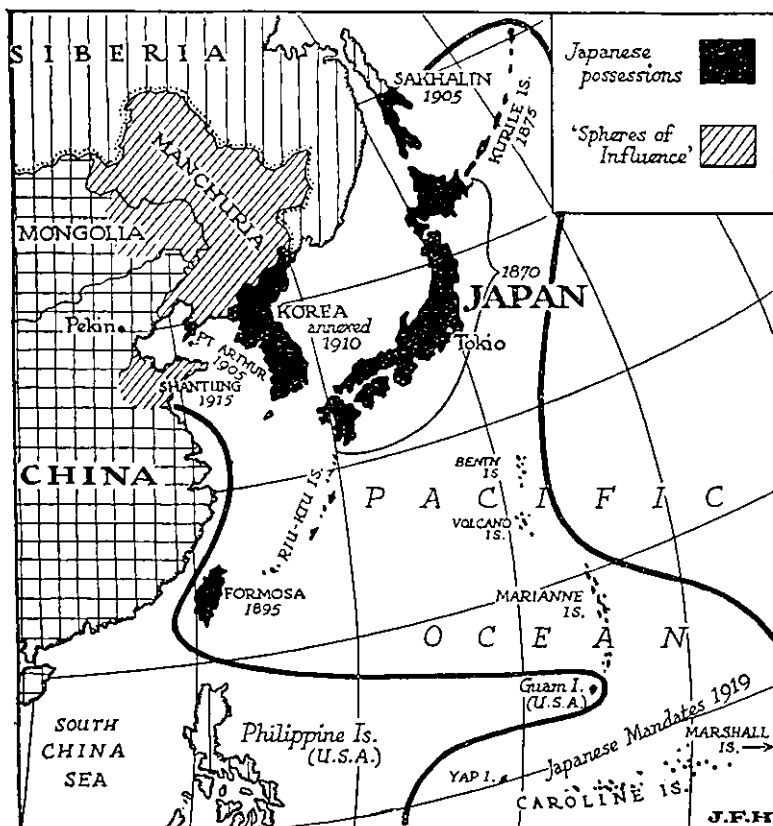
But, in the meantime, a new modern Industrialist-Imperialist State had arisen on the spot. Less than twenty years after she had ceased to be the “hermit Japan kingdom,” Japan broke with her feudal past by a revolution which gave the reins of government to a group of nobles determined on competing with the foreigners at their own game. To this end they set themselves to re-organise their country on western capitalist lines. Before the end of the century the new Japan had made it clear that her aim was nothing less than the domination of the Far East. She had declared war on and defeated China, and established a protectorate over Korea (over which China had formerly claimed suzerainty), thus securing for herself a footing—in a “key position”—on the mainland. The case for Korean independence resembles those of Ireland and Egypt, in that geographical location makes it impossible

¹ “World Atlas of Commercial Geology” (U.S. Geological Survey).

² “Capitalism and the Far East.” G. Horwill.

AN OUTLINE OF

in a world of rival imperialisms. "She occupies a geographical position in relation to Japan that would be a standing menace to that empire if Korea were strong, and is a standing invitation to the domination of the mainland since she is weak."¹ At the same time Japan forced China to cede to



MAP 36.—The expansion of Japan since 1870.

her the islands of the Pescadores archipelago and Formosa, commanding the Chinese coastline. Her island empire now "fringed the coast of Asia for 3,000 miles." Ten years later (1904-5) she defeated Russia, whose rival ambitions in Man-

¹ "Deucalion," *Daily Herald*, review of "The Case of Korea," by Henry Chung.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

churia and Eastern Mongolia constituted the most immediate danger to her hold on Korea ; and took over the Russian lease of Port Arthur, the sea outlet of Manchuria.¹

In the great struggle for the exploitation of the trade and the untouched mineral wealth of China, therefore, Japan—compared with the European States and America—enjoys all the purely geographical advantages. Her bases are near at hand ; her islands command the whole Asiatic coast ; her possession of Korea and Port Arthur gives her jumping-off places far better placed strategically than Britain's bases in Hong Kong and Singapore, or America's in the Philippines. She is the "natural" dominant power in the Far East, given the industrial development sufficient to maintain that position. And during the World War, when her rivals were busily engaged elsewhere, she made full use of her advantage of location by securing for herself special privileges and monopolies in China ; especially in Shantung, another "key position," as rich, moreover, in mineral resources as it is strategically important.

But in certain other respects her position is not so strong, particularly when compared with America. Her own mineral resources are—relatively—insignificant. She is, as yet, exporting coal, but her resources are small. As regards iron she is still poorer, her production being quite inadequate for her own needs. She is, therefore, vitally interested in securing control of the coal and iron of China. And this brings her at once into rivalry with America ; not—as we already know—because America stands in any need of additional supplies of either, but because of the geographical distribution of the coal inside the United States. All the great American coalfields lie on the east of the continent—nearer to the Atlantic shore ; and as her Pacific coast develops industrially, she can only supply it with coal either by expensive trans-continental rail routes or by sea via Panama.² "It is not unlikely, therefore, that Chinese coal may in future be supplied to American Pacific ports by the Japanese at a less price than American coal can be put there" [thanks, of course, to cheap labour], "and that through this develop-

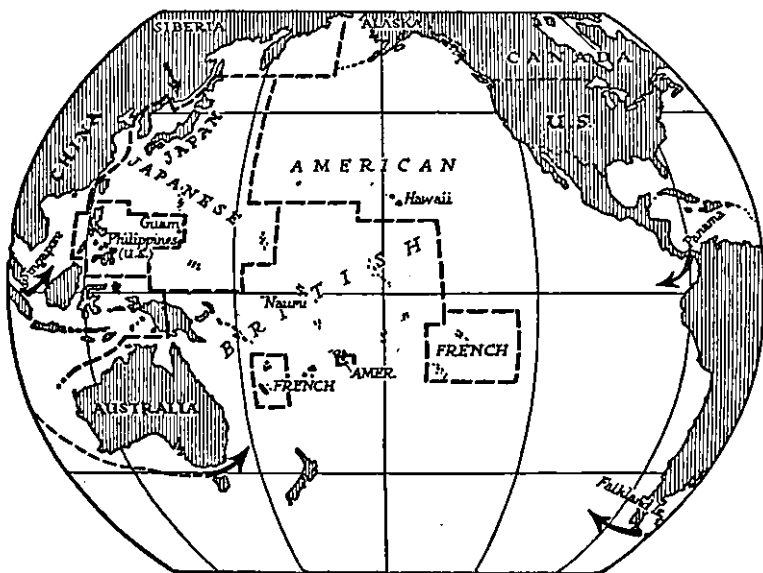
¹ For more detailed account of the rise to power of Japan see the Plebe "Outline of Imperialism," chap. x.

² It should be remembered, however, that the water-power of Western America may make it to a certain extent independent of coal supplies.

AN OUTLINE OF

ment Japan may be able to dominate Pacific trade as England has dominated that of the Atlantic and Pacific in the past."¹ One has only to remember the extent to which British trade was based and built up on coal export to realise the full significance of this probability.

For the power which is to exercise undisputed hegemony in the Far East must control the Pacific. The ways into China are, with one exception, sea-ways. Only The Pacific in the north has Russia access to practicable land gateways leading to the Hwang-ho valley—the Problem same land gateways through which, in past centuries, Mongul and Manchu barbarians rode down to invade the rich valley lands.² Japan's control of the sea-ways depends upon her supremacy in the open ocean



MAP 37.—Political map of the Pacific. The arrows indicate the "gateways" from the Indian and Atlantic oceans.

¹ Spurr, "Political and Commercial Geology," p. 525.

² The most important of these, that through Manchuria, is now in Japanese hands, through her control of the Chinese Eastern Railway—the "short cut" from Siberia to the open ocean.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

behind her. And her every step towards the realisation of her ambitions is watched by the two great groups with "Pacific interests"—America and Britain. Until after the World War she was allied with the latter. But that alliance would appear to have been superseded, in effect, at Washington (1921) by an Anglo-American agreement aiming at defeating Japanese ambitions.

The two chief gateways to the Pacific are held by her rivals—the British at Singapore, the Americans at Panama. The two remaining gateways—each leading from "long way round" routes—are via the southern coasts of Australia, and the old way round Cape Horn, commanded by the Falkland Islands. Both these are in British control.

Within the Pacific itself there has been a scramble for "key" islands which recalls the way in which Britain built up her control of the Atlantic and Indian oceans during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Islands commanding steamship or cable routes have become of vital importance. By the post-war settlement Japan obtained all the Pacific islands north of the equator which up to 1914 had been Germany's; and these give her various points of strategic importance athwart the direct American route between Hawaii—the "halfway house" in mid-Pacific—and the Philippines.

The Pacific came late into world history. But it is fairly safe to say that it will be well in the centre of the picture during the next half century.

The question, as yet not finally settled—Who is to control and exploit China?—is, then, the essence of the position in the Far East. We may take it for granted that China will fall under the virtual control of one or other of the outside powers, even if she retains any sort of nominal political independence of any kind. It is exceedingly unlikely that any sort of re-organisation from within, like that which occurred in Japan, will happen in China. The very size of the country makes it difficult; and until the further development of railways and communications makes such a "group consciousness" possible as was relatively easy in the group of small islands which form Japan, China can easily be "divided against herself" by outside powers working for

AN OUTLINE OF

their own interests. The old Chinese social system, based on a more or less exact similarity of economic conditions over a vast area, fell to pieces at the first contact with industrial civilisation. And the resulting chaos is the foreigner's great opportunity.

If Japan, making full use of her various geographical advantages, succeeds in securing for herself a monopoly of the resources of China, she will head a Group well able to hold its own, economically and militarily, against its powerful rivals. With about a quarter of the world's total population, a wealth of fundamentally important raw materials, particularly coal, and an industrial organisation built up on an exceptionally low standard of living, this Far Eastern group would constitute a very real "Yellow Peril" to the competing Imperialisms. More than twenty years ago an American writer¹ declared that "on the decision of the fate of China may, perhaps, hinge the economic supremacy of the next century."

Will a separate Asiatic Group be consolidated? Or will the resources of China be added to the already vast resources of America—or be shared between America and Britain?

Or will the exploited workers of China, of Japan, of America, and of Britain, forgetting their racial differences, and remembering only their common interests, put an end to capitalist exploitation, East and West?

¹ Brooks Adams, "America's Economic Supremacy" (1900), p. 196.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER X

THE WORLD OF TO-DAY : (4) RUSSIA

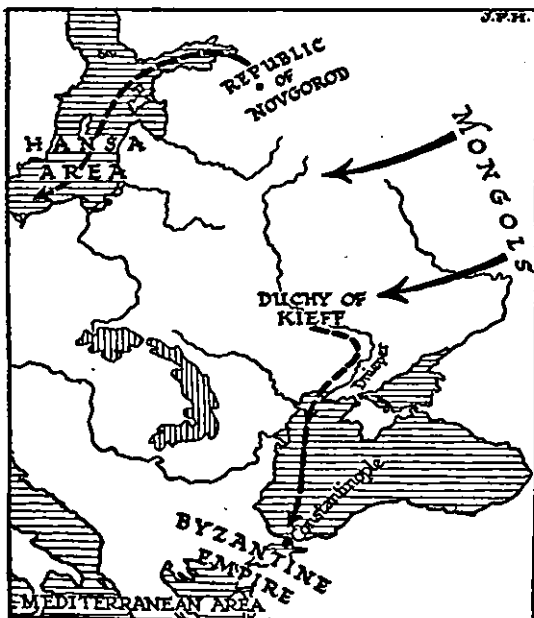
WE have come now to the discussion of a "group" which is not only a fairly clearly-marked geographical unit—the great plain forming the northern part of the continents of Europe and Asia—but one which, by recent internal political and economic happenings, is sharply differentiated from the other great groups : Russia. Here for the first time we encounter a group of States in which the ruling power is no longer a capitalist, exploiting class, but one in which a new form of government has been set up by workers, peasants, and soldiers. And in the actual history of the epoch-making Revolution, as well as in the problems confronting the Federation of Soviet Republics to-day, geographical factors played and are playing an important part.

We have already seen (Chapter V) how Russia was one of the European States whose industrial development was first made possible when the era of land transport came. Her enormous area—almost unbroken by mountains—her lack of coast-line, the fact that her greatest rivers empty themselves either into land-locked seas or into the ice-bound Arctic—all these made for a chronic state of "arrested development" until the age of railways. Pre-1914 Russia included half the total area of Europe ; and European Russia only formed about a quarter of the area of the Russian Empire, which constituted about one-seventh of the total land area of the world. If this enormous mass had had, like the United States, coast-lines fronting the open ocean, its history might have been vastly different. But its greatest extent of coast-line lay along the frozen Arctic ; and in Europe its two sea outlets were both on enclosed seas—the Baltic and the Black. Thus, not only did the vast extent of the Great Plain make internal development slow, but Russia was to an abnormal extent cut off from free communication with the outer world—a condition of things inevitably making for retardation. Moreover, her extremes

AN OUTLINE OF

of climate (due to the vastness of this land mass) made any kind of economic activity impossible for considerable periods of every year.

All through Russian history these fundamental geographical factors are clearly evident. The earliest centres of civilisation in Russia were in the south, at **Geographical** Kieff, and in the north, at Novgorod (see **Factors in** Map 38). Both were dependent on communications with centres outside Russia; **Russian** and both decayed when those outside centres **History** declined. Kieff, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was a flourishing inland state linked by



MAP 38.—Early centres of civilisation in Russia, and their links with the Northern (Hansa) and Mediterranean areas.

the Dnieper river and the Black Sea with the Eastern Empire at Byzantium (Constantinople); and from Byzantium Kieff copied her religion, her art, and her architecture. When the Turks finally destroyed that link, Kieff relapsed into barbarism.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

In the north, during the Middle Ages, the republic of Novgorod flourished on its trade with the merchants of the Hansa; it was a part of that northern "inland sea area" which reached its greatest point of prosperity immediately before the opening up of the ocean routes, and which rapidly declined when trade moved westward to the Atlantic. And when the Hansa declined, "Lord Novgorod the Great," as the republic styled itself, declined also.

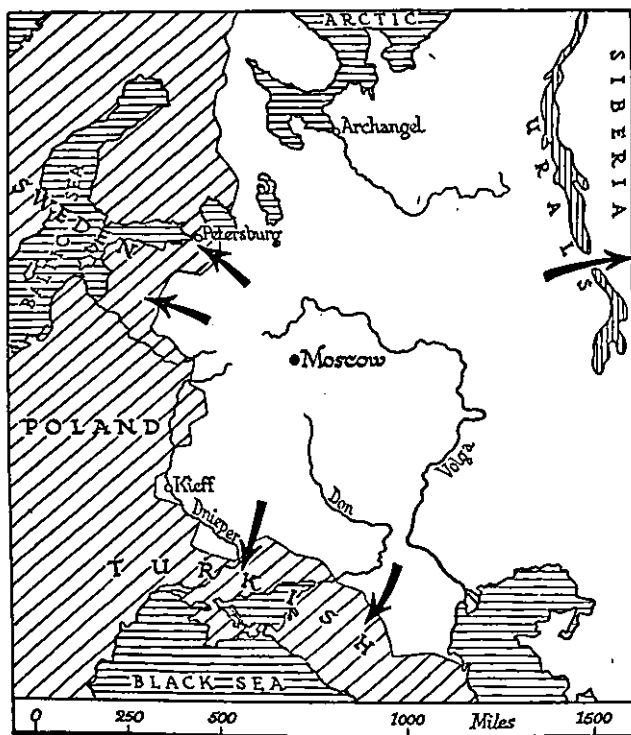
Meantime, for a brief period during the thirteenth century, the whole of the Great Plain—from Europe to northern China—was brought under one yoke: that of Jenghis Khan and his Mongols. And it should be noticed that this dominance was based on the expert use and control of the most efficient means of land transport then available—the horse. Jenghis and his hordes, from their base south of Lake Baikal, covered the thousands of miles of plain with incredible swiftness; and never again, till the coming of the railways, was the whole of the Plain effectively dominated by a single central government.

The Mongol Empire broke up; but for three centuries more Mongol overlords ruled over much of European Russia, and all of Northern and Central Asia. Then, in the heart of the European Plain, the people of a small protected area around Moscow began to push the nomads back from their forest borders, and the State of Muscovy grew up—the State which was to be the nucleus of the Russian Empire. First, its people pushed up northwards to the Arctic Sea; and through Archangel, their only port, they were trading with English merchants by the end of the sixteenth century. A century later, under Peter the Great, the country underwent the same sort of revolution, on a smaller scale, as transformed Japan half a century ago. Peter was resolved on bringing Russia into more direct communication with Europe and on re-organising the State on Western lines. He defeated the Swedes, at that time supreme on both sides of the Baltic, and gave Russia a Baltic coast-line, transferring his capital from Moscow to his new city, Petersburg, on the Neva. "The Dnieper made Russia Byzantine, the Volga made it Asiatic. It was for the Neva to make it European."

The history of Russia, so far as its relations with the

AN OUTLINE OF

outer world are concerned, has been from Peter's day down to the time of the last Tsar the story of a persistent pressure to the sea—of constant effort, that is, to conquer the natural disadvantages of inland location. During the eighteenth century she added to her Baltic coast-line; and at the



MAP 39.—Russia's pressure towards the sea from Peter the Great's time onward. Note that she was entirely cut off from "open water," the Arctic being ice-bound during the greater part of the year, and the Caspian being an enclosed lake.

same time, to the south, she was pushing the Turk from the northern shore of the Black Sea.

All the time her Cossacks, settlers, and fur traders were extending her borders eastwards into Asia in a ceaseless war with the nomad. Before the end of the sixteenth century the Urals had been crossed, a century later the Cossacks

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

had established themselves as far east as Lake Baikal, and "the lure of the distant horizon" drew them on until the Pacific coast itself was reached. This struggle was not only an affair of actual warfare; it was also a struggle between two rival economic systems—sedentary agriculture and nomadism. Steadily the nomads were pushed east and south into the plateaus of the Altai Mountains; and the six thousand miles of plain from the Urals to the Pacific was "colonised" by the Slavs.

But Russia, though ruled by a Europeanised bureaucracy, was still a mediæval State; her workers were serfs, bound to the land; and her methods of agriculture were primitive in the extreme. Her sheer size was a benumbing influence until, in the mid-nineteenth century, the first railways were laid down, and it became possible at last to begin effectively to organise and unify her vast resources. The extent to which Russia was still, in the twentieth century, right down to the outbreak of the war, a relatively backward State industrially was due to the still inadequate development of her railway system.

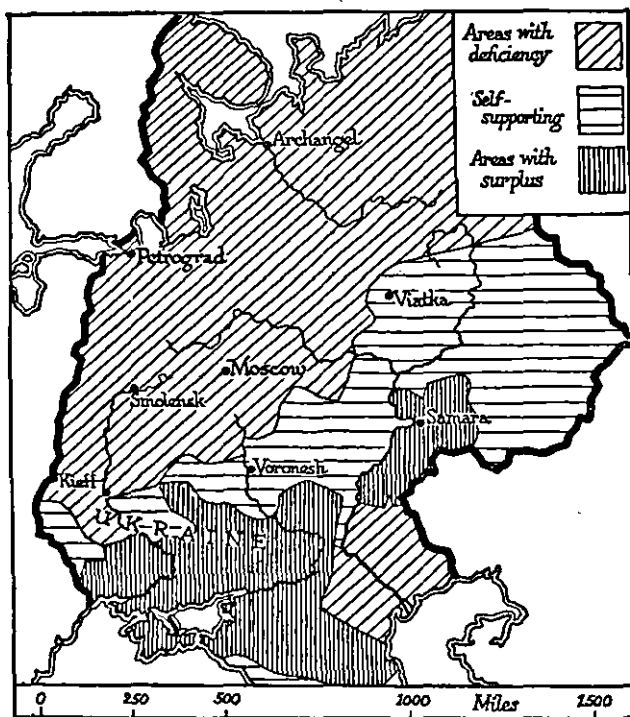
Nevertheless, from the coming of the railway onwards she has made enormous strides forwards. Her serfs had become "free" peasants or wage-workers. Whole districts had been industrialised. For the first time communication between the various parts of the empire was possible at all seasons of the year.¹ "She was enabled to bring the corn of the black earth zone to the northern forest regions where there is a deficiency of food; . . . to provide the corn area with the wood it needed from the north for fuel in return . . . Her iron and coal were developed by the possibilities of transferring the steel products which were made in the Donetz region, in the south, to the place of use.

¹ The Russian rivers, excellent means of transport though many of them are, are all frozen over during the winter. In the extreme south-west—the corner nearest to the Mediterranean—the Dniester is ice-bound for over seventy days in the year. The middle and upper Volga, and all the rivers in the centre of Russia, are frozen over from one hundred and forty to one hundred and sixty days; while in the north the period is from five and a-half to seven months. In Siberia the rivers are frozen for at least five months, and in the extreme north for nine months (W. G. Kendrew, "The Climates of the Continents," p. 180).

² Over about three-fourths of European Russia there is normally a deficiency of food, which must be made good by the areas providing a surplus. That is to say, large areas of Russia are as dependent on land transport for food supplies as Britain is on sea transport (see Map 40).

AN OUTLINE OF

The cotton factories found a market not merely all over Russia but in Northern China and Central Asia, while drawing a large part of their raw cotton supplies from Turkestan or America."¹ The railways, in short, were making Russia a unit, instead of a sprawling collection of independent, isolated areas.



MAP 40.—Grain production in European Russia, showing (i) the areas which produce less than the amount requisite to feed their populations, (ii) those which are (roughly) self-supporting, and (iii) those producing a surplus. (The map is based on the average figures, 1908-12, for the production of wheat, rye, barley, and oats.)

And not European Russia only; but the vast plains and steppes east of the Urals also. For just before the end of the century one of the most daring of all railway schemes was realised, and Moscow was linked with Vladivostok, on the Pacific—between six thousand and seven thousand miles away—by the Trans-Siberian line. At last Russia

¹ Knowles, "Industrial and Commercial Revolutions," p. 188.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

had a port on the open ocean; and at last the systematic development of the vast natural resources of Siberia became a possibility.

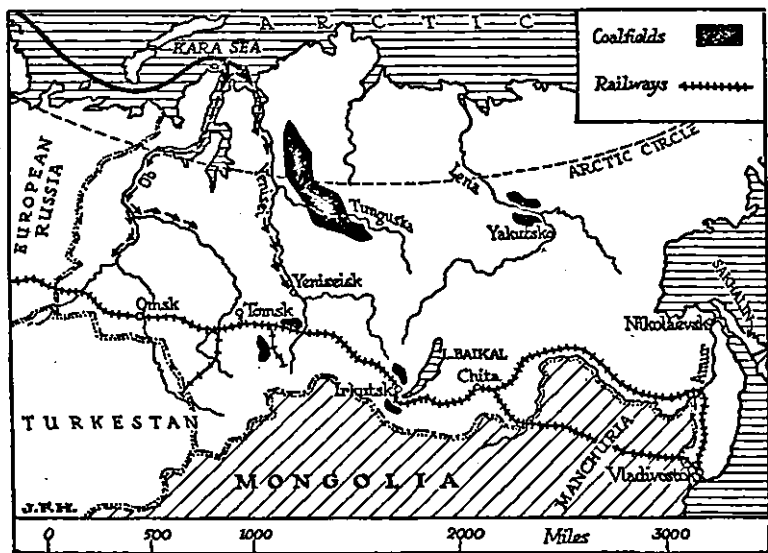
Now let us note how these same geographical factors which we have seen operating all through Russian history affected the Revolution in 1917 when the Tsardom was overthrown and a Workers' Republic set up. In the first place, Russia's vast size, and her—as yet—inadequate land transport system, safeguarded the Revolution in its early stages. And secondly, these factors provide the main problem which the new Government has to face and solve in its task of re-organising Russia.

A social revolution is inevitably followed by attempts on the part of outside powers to put down the revolution by force or by blockade. Both weapons were used against Russia; both failed. Her size—the sheer distance of her main centres from her frontiers—has always been Russia's strongest defence against military invasion. "The long road to Moscow converted Napoleon's victory into a defeat." So when the Soviet leaders transferred the seat of government from Petrograd to the old capital, Moscow, they were relying on the facts of geography to operate again as they had operated before. And they did so. Every hostile advance—from north, south, east, or west—broke down through the sheer length of its communications long before Moscow was reached. Koltchak's drive across the Urals or Denikin's northwards from the Black Sea would either of them have carried right across Hungary, for example, from frontier to frontier (and the failure of the revolution in Hungary should be a standing warning to revolutionists against ignoring geographical factors).

Blockade was no more successful—even though Russia's few outlets made blockade comparatively easy. For a far longer period than a more highly industrialised country, Russia—so far at any rate as the bare necessities of life were concerned—could be self-supporting. And the history of the last five years in Russia has made it plain that only a country which, at a pinch, can be independent of the rest of the world—at any rate for a fairly long period—can maintain a separate revolution after it has made one.

AN OUTLINE OF

The problem of land transport, again, is the great problem facing the Soviet Government to-day. Not only, remember, was the pre-war Russian railway system inadequate. But it had almost completely broken down during the war; and the years of civil wars since To-day have still further damaged it. The great task is to restore it—and extend it. That is the essential preliminary to industrial and even agricultural development. Russia can easily feed herself—and all Europe too—if she has the means of transport. A famine in one area can easily



MAP 41.—Siberia's transport problem. The one railway is the Trans-Siberian. The map shows the Kara sea route to the Ob and Yenisei rivers, but this is only practicable for a few weeks in the year.

be counteracted by the surplus of another—if the transport is available. The wheat of the south and east, the timber of the north, the coal and iron of the Donetz and of Siberia, the oil of Baku—with these ample resources she can, if need be, carry on even though blockaded by the rest of the world, *once she has solved her inland transport problem.* In that lies the key to her successful re-organisation. It is all the more vital because lumber, grain, hay, &c., are bulky products which need to be handled on a big scale. (Note that the

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

problem of railway building is simplified by the fact that Russia is a plain, with no mountainous areas making construction difficult.)

In the case of Siberia, transport is even more vital than in European Russia. Siberia, remember, is far greater in size than the United States; and its economic resources are as yet only vaguely known. Transport facilities are the indispensable pre-requisite to their development. "Siberia possesses the largest coalfield in the world, along the northern reaches of the Yenisei river. It is stated to be forty times as large as the Donetz basin, and three times the area of the largest (single) field in America. *But the bulk of these deposits lie about one hundred to one hundred and fifty miles away from the river; and there is no railway within five hundred miles of any part of the field.*"¹ Only a single line of railway—the Trans-Siberian—crosses the continent. There are two or three small branch lines to the south of this; none at all to the north. Until railways can be built the Soviet Government is considering the possibilities of using the rivers (especially the Yenisei) while they are free from ice, and the Kara Sea route to Archangel or to Western Europe—a scheme involving a chain of wireless stations along the Arctic coast, to report and advise on movements of the ice, &c. If this plan is successful, then the old search for a "North-East Passage" will have been realised at last.

How, then, does this Russian group—this Federation of Soviet Republics and autonomous provinces—compare in possibilities and resources with the other great world groups?

and Possibilities them. In actual development it is, as yet, behind them. In possibilities it ranks, perhaps, second to America only—it may even be second to none. "The surface of Russian resources has so far been scratched over with a light rake." Its coal and iron supplies, though still very largely an unknown quantity, are considerable.² Its petroleum output is second only to that of the United States. Its timber resources are by far the greatest in the world. In wheat production Russia, with the Ukraine,

¹ *Russian Information and Review*, article on "Siberia's Economic Development."

² A recent estimate of the potential iron resources of the Kursk province (250 miles south of Moscow) puts the total quantity of ore at more than six times that of Lorraine, the largest ironfield in Europe.

AN OUTLINE OF

used to rank second only to the United States—in 1918, indeed, she topped the United States output, and this despite the fact that, owing to unskilled methods of production, the Russian yield per acre was only half the American.¹

But, again, the key to all this wealth is *transport*. “Soil and climate, forests and minerals, do not make an empire; they furnish merely the physical basis for one.” To the extent that she needs locomotives, and industrial machinery generally, Russia is dependent on the aid of the more industrially developed Powers to get on to her feet. Once she has gone a step or two on the way towards solving the transport problem, then her huge size and vast resources will render her—if need be—practically independent of the rest of the world. Politically, she is already more closely knit than any of the other groups. Once her economic and industrial development triumphs over the natural obstacles which have made her progress slow in the past, then the future of the one Workers’ Group is assured.

¹ In the Black Earth zone two crops a year have been produced without the aid of any fertilisers!

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

CHAPTER XI.

THE WORLD OF TO-DAY: (5) THE FRENCH EMPIRE

BRITAIN entered the Great War in order to destroy her most powerful European rival—Germany. The net result of the war for Britain (so far as Europe is concerned) is that that rival has been destroyed, but that an even more powerful one has been set up in her place—France.

Prussia's The basis of Germany's strength was her
Successor great reserves of coal and iron. The iron—by far the greater part of it at any rate—was, by the Peace Treaty, ceded to France. And the unwavering aim of French policy since the "Peace" has been to secure also the coal without which the iron cannot be worked. The great Lorraine ore field, which, before the war, was divided between France and Germany (and from her part of which Germany drew 75 per cent. of her iron supplies), is now entirely French. "France now controls the cheapest iron ore supply in Europe or available for European use."¹ She is, therefore, so far as the basic raw material of the heavy industries is concerned, in a stronger position compared to Britain than ever Germany was.

The important point for us to notice is that the capitalist group which governs the France of to-day is the heavy industrial group. France before the war, as countless writers have told us, was pre-eminently a nation of small peasant proprietors; it was, practically speaking, self-supporting (*except as regards coal*) and so far as foreign affairs were concerned it was primarily a nation of money-lenders—the savings of the peasants and petty bourgeoisie going to swell loans to the Tsar's and other governments. The "New France," like the old Germany, is built on the more modern foundation of iron and steel; and the iron and steel masters—the Comité des Forges—direct French policy to-day. The acquisition of Lorraine gave them the means, and the necessary reconstruction of the whole of France's economic system after the shattering dislocation of the

¹ Eckel, "Coal, Iron, and War," p. 331.

AN OUTLINE OF

war gave them the opportunity, to seize the reins of power. French "militarism" is merely their tool.

France's industrial development, in the full modern sense, is, therefore, a thing of almost yesterday's growth. It has, in fact, still to grow. And it cannot grow

The One without *coal*.

Thing Her lack of coal has been the main reason for
Lacking her retardment. Her industrial history may be said to date from the same time (and cause) as Germany's—the beginnings of railway construction, in the middle of the nineteenth century. But while Germany had ample coal, France had little—and what little there was, with the exception of the north-eastern field along the Belgian frontier, was scattered in small deposits in various parts of the country.

No closely grouped large industry depending on heavy use of coal could grow up under such conditions. On the other hand, these very conditions were an inducement to a system of scattered local manufactures which might nevertheless yield a large total output, particularly in such industries as used only small amounts of fuel; and that is what really occurred. France became the best example of widely scattered industry, as compared with the highly concentrated industry, grouped around great coalfields, which arose in England, Germany, and America.¹

In that part of Lorraine which remained to her after 1871 she had large reserves of iron. But, though she mined this ore in increasing quantities, she had to export it, having no coke with which to smelt it and work it herself. By 1913 she had become the largest exporter of "raw" ore in the world; so that in regard to the basic industry of modern times she was—compared to England, Germany, or America—a mere "colony," a source of raw material simply.

The Peace Treaty of 1919 more than doubled her reserves of iron ore. Was she to continue to be a mere exporter of raw material, or were her capitalists to embark on the more profitable business of smelting and manufacturing the iron? The answer to that depended entirely on the amount of coal over which they could secure control. And this was the factor which accelerated the spread of "pure and simple" Imperialism on European soil—the seizure of territory and the exploitation (or attempted exploitation) of its resources entirely regardless of the will of the people inhabiting that territory.

¹ Eckel, p. 67.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

The treaty gave to France the coal of the Saar field. But the Saar produced only 15 per cent. of the coke which Germany had used in working the Lorraine iron ore. The bulk of that coke—over two-thirds of it—came from the Ruhr. And the vital consideration impelling the French ironmasters to seize that field was this: *Several tons of coal are needed to smelt one ton of iron; it is, therefore, cheaper to carry iron to coal than to bring the coal to the iron.* Not only was the Lorraine iron relatively useless without the Ruhr coke; but it would be less profitable to work it, in Lorraine, by importing the coke from the Ruhr. The iron must be carried to the Ruhr. Actual control of the Ruhr area was, therefore, essential. The two areas are linked by ample (and cheap) transport facilities—rail and canal. The political frontier dividing them was an anachronism.

The French excuse for entering the Ruhr was, of course, the desire to bring pressure to bear on Germany in order to get her to pay her "Reparations" debts. But obviously some more permanent basis for the occupation of the area would be necessary. And this is forthcoming in the scheme for a Rhineland Republic—an "independent" buffer State which would include practically all the most highly industrialised parts of Germany—and would, of course, be as independent of France as the Republic of Panama is independent of the United States of America. Secure in control of Lorraine ore and Ruhr coke, the French ironmasters (who may very likely take into partnership a few capitalists of German nationality, but who would speak through the mouth of the French government and rely on the French military machine) should be in no doubt as to who won the Great War.

What of the rest of the Group of which this "New France" is the leader and industrial centre? There is, first and most obviously, the French colonial empire—**Post-War** in Africa and Asia; and, secondly, a large part **Europe** of Central Europe, nominally consisting of "independent states," but actually of French colonies or spheres of influence. Let us, for the sake of completing our sketch of the European situation, briefly discuss the second group first.

Germany is at the present time practically a French

AN OUTLINE OF

possession¹—her chief industrial areas occupied by France, and her whole territory lying open to further French aggression. If she were dismembered by the establishment of a Rhineland Republic under French suzerainty, then the Eastern Germany which remained would be—could be—only a very minor power indeed, bound to be absorbed sooner or later by the French group—or by the Russian. For the



MAP 42.—France and the French "spheres of influence" in Europe. Note that the chief coalfields (and therefore industrial centres) are now under direct or indirect French control. Note also that effective "contact" between France and her Eastern European vassals necessitates a permanently weak Germany.

major part of her only remaining coalfield, that of Upper Silesia, has been ceded to Poland.

Poland, one of the new "independent" States created by the Peace Treaties, is a French sphere of influence. So is Rumania, which gained a large amount of new territory after the war. And in all the small States set up on the ruins of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, French capitalists are busy "penetrating." They are nowhere entirely predominant—except perhaps in Poland and Rumania;

¹ Since this was written the Dawes Scheme has made Germany rather a "sphere of influence" of the United States, with France and Britain as subsidiary partners in her exploitation.

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

British and American capital is also busy in these same areas. One may say, indeed, that here there is a permanent state of war between the great Groups. But, except in the cases of those lands touching the Mediterranean, France has the indisputable advantage of geographical position.

This same factor, as well of course as financial penetration, makes Belgium a member of the French Group—and the Belgian coal reserves make it a very important asset. So long as Europe consisted of half a dozen approximately equal and rival powers, Belgium might secure a sort of independence by binding herself to permanent neutrality. But when, as to-day, economic development makes for the hegemony of a single power, such a State as Belgium must perforce become a satellite of that power—especially when that power is its nearest neighbour.

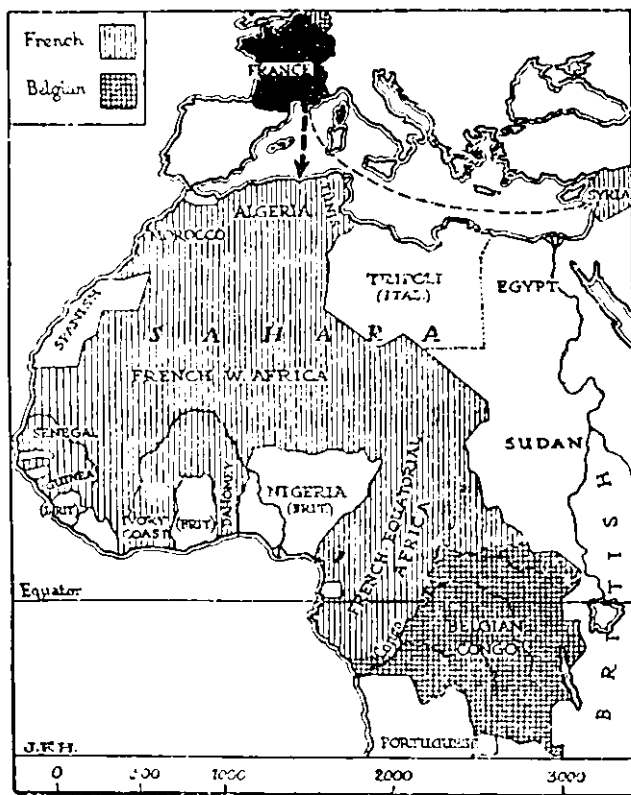
The French Group in Europe, then, controls yet more resources than those of Lorraine and the Ruhr; to these have to be added Belgian and Polish (Silesian) coal, Galician and Rumanian oil, and Rumanian wheat, to name only a few. And all these territories, note, are—given control of Germany—a geographical unity, with an already highly developed transport system, by rail, river, and canal. France is endeavouring to realise the “Mittel Europa” scheme which Germany visualised but failed to achieve.

Besides these European territories there are the French African possessions. France has the second largest colonial empire in the world—though its value is scarcely proportionate to its area. She lagged behind Germany—for the reasons we have noted—in internal industrial development. But she went far ahead of her in annexations abroad, especially in Africa. And she gained much additional territory after the war. She has the advantage over Britain in that all her possessions are governed directly by the central French Government; she has not to face the problems caused by the conflicting interests of self-governing dominions.

The French Empire in Africa is a solid block of territory extending from the Mediterranean south to the Congo—including, indeed, in the Belgian Congo, the whole of that river and its tributaries up to its sources. This vast area is divided by the Sahara desert; and to complete its unification a trans-Saharan railway is essential. Two lines

AN OUTLINE OF

are proposed, one to Timbuctoo and thence to Senegal; one to Agades and Lake Chad, at the north of the Cameroons. Already the great desert has been "conquered"—by motor cars; and the Citroën expedition (June, 1923) has doubtless blazed a trail along which in the not too distant future iron rails will be laid.



MAP 43.—France and the Mediterranean, and the French African Empire.

This African territory is linked to France by the cross-Mediterranean route, from Marseilles to Algiers or Tunis. That is to say, the whole of the French group (excepting only Madagascar, French Indo-China, and one or two minor possessions in Asia and America) is a geographical unit—

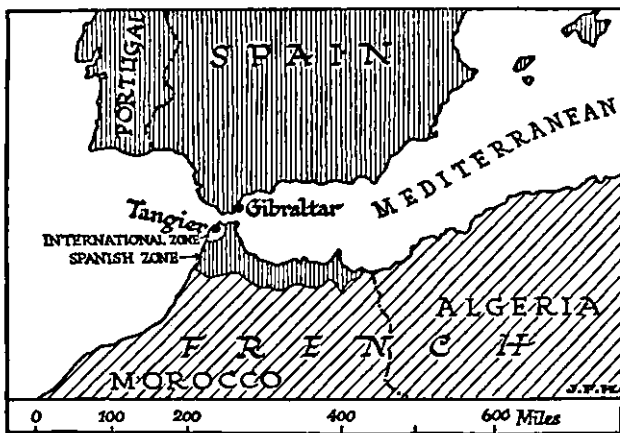
The Mediterranean Link

two land areas, the smaller, the industrially

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

developed one, in Europe; and the larger in Africa, linked by a short sea route. The safeguarding of this route must obviously, then, be a primary consideration of French policy. We have already noted that the British "main road" to the Indian Ocean also runs through the Mediterranean. Here, therefore, the facts of geography make for a very definite clash of interests between France and Britain. Both need, in order to make a vital route entirely safe, to be supreme in a single sea. And each, therefore, aims at bringing either under direct control, or at least under its influence, the lands bordering that sea.

France's own southern coast-line is on that sea, and she possesses a great part of the opposite coast—Morocco, Algiers, and Tunis; so that most of the coasts of the Western Mediterranean are under her control. After the war she gained a base in the Eastern half of the sea by securing the mandate



MAP 44.—The western gateway of the Mediterranean. Note how the Spanish zone south and east of Tangier keeps the French at arm's length from the important stretch of coast facing Gibraltar.

for Syria. Britain owns Gibraltar, commanding the Atlantic gate; the "half-way house" of Malta, and the island of Cyprus; and she controls the Red Sea gate at Suez. After the war she strengthened her position in regard to Suez by getting the mandate for Palestine.

Various "international problems" of to-day centre

AN OUTLINE OF

round this struggle for Mediterranean control. The opposite "gatepost" to Gibraltar, the Franco-British port of Tangier, is at present under international Rivalry control. French policy aims at bringing it, like the rest of Morocco, under French "protection." Britain, and Britain's vassal, Spain, oppose this. The immediate hinterland of Tangier and the coast for some two hundred miles to the east of it is a "Spanish zone"; and this strip of territory keeps France at arm's length from the vital gateway. In the Eastern Mediterranean Britain supports and subsidises Greece; France retaliates by negotiations with Turkey. The Turco-Greek struggle is really a struggle between the two greater powers, each supporting its satellite in order to strengthen its own position. And the end of that struggle is not yet!

In two vitally important respects, then, the interests of the British and the French Groups are antagonistic—as competitors in the heavy metal industries, and as rivals for the control of the Mediterranean Sea. And either of these is sufficient to produce a plentiful crop of international problems and crises in the near future.

It remains to add to this chapter a postscript on the country which is almost the only, certainly the most considerable, State as yet maintaining some independence of any of the great Groups we have been discussing—Italy. But Italian independence is more apparent than real. Italy has no coal, and she is therefore inevitably dependent on whichever Group can supply her need.¹ Were either France or Britain absolutely supreme in the Mediterranean, Italian independence would be a still more shadowy thing. Her advantageous position within that sea enables her to bid for the backing now of one, now of the other. But the very fact that she is an entirely inland sea State would—even if she possessed coal—condemn her to a secondary position in the days of ocean routes, unless she were strong enough to dominate the whole Mediterranean and its gateways. The days have gone by when the Mediterranean was the whole world, and the advantage now lies with those States which have coasts *outside* it.

¹ And military ardour, in these modern days, is no substitute for coal. As Signor Mussolini himself remarked: "Battleships cannot get up steam on songs."

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

Sooner or later, Italy's dependence on outside sources for the basic raw material of modern industry—fuel—will inevitably attach her either to the French or the British Group. And her reserves of cheap human labour-power will probably make her most useful to the iron and steel industries of the "New France."

AN OUTLINE OF

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSIONS

IN this book we have traced in broad outline a steady progress, throughout the centuries of human history, towards world interdependence. We have seen that in the world of to-day a greater degree of economic interdependence exists than ever before. At the present time, however, the world is split up *politically* among several rival Imperialist groups, which we have described. The struggle between these groups for control of those surfaces of the globe which have not yet been partitioned out among them has the result of throwing the economic life of the world into chaos. Whereas every part of the world is *economically* dependent on every other part of the world, different parts of the world are *politically* separated from one another, and are in rivalry with one another. Britain wants the corn from Russia, and Russia wants machinery from Britain. Both suffer because exchange between them is hindered. British industry is brought to a standstill because Central Europe is so impoverished as to be unable to buy British goods. Central Europe, hitherto an economic unit in which each part *specialised* on some industry and relied on *exchange* with other parts, is split up into numerous rival political States, which put up tariff barriers against one another. Recently we have seen French Imperialism seizing control of the Ruhr, and as a result throwing into worse confusion the whole economic life of Europe.

It is clear, therefore, that it is the existence of Imperialism, the policy of the big capitalist groups, which is preventing the harmonious economic development of the world at the present stage. To fight and to defeat the various sections of world capitalism, and to prepare the way for the One World Group of Workers, the workers have to organise themselves on a world basis *without distinction of race or colour or nationality*. It is quite wrong to think that

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

“economic development” will in some mystic way bring about One World Group “when the time is ripe,” and that, therefore, we need not trouble much about it. Nothing is inevitable, and history is made by human *action*. Hence, unless the workers organise on a world basis to fight capitalist imperialism, and to create a One World Group, this next step of progress will probably not occur.

Hitherto the British working class, enjoying a higher standard of life, owing to the prosperity of their masters, have tended to look down on their coloured comrades in India and China, and to side with their masters in defence of Imperialism. The “palace slaves” at home, enjoying slightly more comfort, have forgotten that they are as much slaves as the less privileged “plantation slaves” in the outposts of the Empire.¹ This attitude on the part of British Labour has clearly been a strength to Imperialism. Moreover, in the long run it will be to British Labour’s disadvantage; for ultimately, at any rate, the interests of the capitalists of every group are the same—the extraction of surplus-value (profits) from wage-slaves, black, brown, yellow, or white. The white workers of Europe and America have to realise—and they will learn it by bitter experience if they do not act in time—that to the boss *all* workers are coolies. His only concern is Cheap Labour; and the opening up of great, hitherto unexploited territories gives him to-day his opportunity. It is of no avail for white workers—in the mass—to organise *against* the black or yellow worker. Capital will go and “give employment” to black and yellow workers in their own lands—and the industrial centres of the world will be shifted from the “white” countries to those where labour yields larger profits. The white workers’ alternatives are—to accept a coolie status—or to organise along with the “coolie” against the common enemy, the exploiter.

More than one line of economic-geographical development to-day points the same moral. The conquest of certain tropical diseases means the opening up of vast territories, hitherto closed to industrial development. The industries based on tropical raw materials can accordingly be economically transferred to the lands whence the raw materials come. The use of water-power again, as a source of electric

¹See article on “The British Empire” by B. Palme Dutt, *Labour Monthly*, October, 1923

AN OUTLINE OF

means the industrial exploitation of yet other areas—*e.g.*, Africa—where inadequate coal supplies have hitherto retarded development. No longer will the industrial centres necessarily be confined to the Temperate Zone. And no longer, therefore, will the workers of temperate lands enjoy any sort of respite from the struggle against capitalism.

Any kind of *nationalism* among the workers will be as futile—as suicidal—as colonialism, race and race antipathy. If, for instance, British workers follow the suggestions of British capitalists that they should cut the workers in those American industries which are most seriously threatening British trade, they will only be paving the way for their own more intensive exploitation. The rivalries of the capitalist groups are not the workers' concern. Their aim is the One World Group, based on the solidarity of all workers; and they have no interest in the maintenance of any existing Empire—British or American, French or Japanese.

Nationalism, and nationalist ideals, are irreconcilable with such an aim. National "liberty," like individual liberty, will have to be subordinated to international needs; and the resources of any one area will have to be used, not as the inhabitants of that area decide, but as the needs of the world's peoples dictate.

But this does not mean that the workers are to support Imperialism when, as often happens, Imperialists appear to be acting in accordance with this view.

World American Imperialists may, and do, plead that
Capitalism the needs of the modern world justify them in
the Enemy gaining control of the mineral resources of the Caribbean area, inhabited by "backward" people. French Imperialists may plead—as we have ourselves pleaded in this book—that the existence of a frontier line separating Ruhr coke from Lorraine iron is an anachronism in the world of to-day. British and Japanese Imperialists may point to the world's need of the unexploited resources of China in justification of their interference in Chinese affairs. The workers will oppose every one of these activities, not because it is "wrong" to ignore the national feelings of Mexicans, Germans, or Chinamen, but because every such activity is a manifestation of aggressive capitalism,

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

and its success would still further strengthen the of American, French, British, and Japanese workers, and prolong the existence of Imperialism and its destructive effects. That is the vital distinction, from the working-class point of view, between Soviet Russia's interference in Georgia and, say, Britain's interference in Persia. Both may have ignored nationalist sentiment: but the one was aimed at gaining control for a Workers' Republic of a vital raw material and at strengthening that Republic in its struggle against world capitalism; while the other aimed at yet further increasing the power of one of the most powerful capitalist groups.

The enemy is Capitalist-Imperialism. And the struggle against Capitalist-Imperialism must be world-wide to be effective. It follows that the international organisation of the workers must be based on as full and accurate knowledge as possible of world affairs and world problems. No section of the workers to-day can undertake an offensive against the common enemy without the reactions of that local struggle being felt to a greater or lesser extent along the whole battle line. And the better those reactions are understood, and the more accurately they can be forecasted, the bigger the chances of working-class victory. That necessitates a World General Staff for the workers' movement. It also involves clear thinking by the rank and file about the issues at stake.

World economic interdependence has done away with self-contained areas. It follows that revolutionary action on the part of any national section of workers cannot hope to be successful if it is taken without regard (i) to the position of the working-class movement elsewhere, and (ii) to the economic-geographical facts bearing on that particular country. The problem of the food supply, the problem of communications and of access to raw materials—these and other such questions have to be faced and solved before workers can successfully take over, and maintain, control. Let us learn from our enemies; and by careful study of world problems which Capitalist-Imperialism is raising, failing to solve, equip ourselves for the task of translating "The World for the Workers" from a war-cry into a reality.