Geographical War Problems in the Near East: Discussion

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claims would be to render her geographically compact, her frontiers marching with Hungary, Galicia and Bulgaria, but with the capital Bucharest, the centre of administration, nowhere near the centre of the dominion. The realization of the Rumanian dream would about double the extent of her territories, and it would rather shorten her over-long boundaries than otherwise. Nevertheless, the western boundary would be shifted from a strong position based on the Carpathian ridges to a weak one east of the Theiss, traversed by at least eight considerable rivers north of the Danube, and affording little opportunity for sound defensive tactics. The Magyar menace on the west would not cease to exist, and would be accentuated by the Magyar occupation of a large block of territory just within the Carpathian bend. On the east of Rumania there is not much to choose between one river boundary and another, between the Pruth and the Dniester, so that the acquisition of Bessarabia would add ethnical strength without weakening the geographical issues. We must not overlook the remarkable progress made in Rumanian financial and material developments during the forty-eight years' rule of the Hohenzollern Prince Charles. Rumania may be said to have risen to the position of the leading Balkan State towards the end of last century. It is for us to see that she loses nothing by renouncing Hohenzollern allegiance.

To close this imperfect review of the many geographical war problems which beset this hotbed of disorder in the Near East, I may venture to point out those which I believe to be of paramount importance. First and foremost is the support of the Jugo-Slav federation on a basis which will render her geographical anatomy complete in the interests of all economic developments internally. She must have her own seaport, and she must continue to safeguard the approaches from Central Europe to Constantinople. The disappearance of Turkey from Europe (which by no means implies the removal of the Turk, who will accept any change of government with a pious reference to Allah and to fate, and stay where he may happen to be) seems to promise opportunity for compensation to Greece for what she resigns of the cosmopolitan province of Macedonia to the New Serbia. Whether Rumania will recover Transylvania, or whether Russia will be content that Bessarabia should be annexed to Rumania, so greatly depend on political issues at the close of the war that the geographical aspect of the problem is comparatively unimportant. I can illustrate only that aspect as I believe it to exist.

Before the paper the PRESIDENT said : It falls to me to introduce myself. I have undertaken to read a paper to-night which is, I am afraid, rather superficial, for it has had to be prepared in a hurry. I must ask for your kind consideration.

(The President then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.)

Viscount BRYCE : The President has carried us over so very wide a field in his most instructive and stimulating lecture that it would be impossible to

do more in responding to his call than to make a few scattered remarks as to some of the numerous topics upon which he has touched. I should feel very much afraid to venture upon the ground of strategy, especially after the warning he has given us that the use of submarine and aerial warfare has given quite a new aspect to questions of frontier strategy and of naval as well as military war. It would be also dangerous for any one to touch the topic to which he cautiously adverted of settlement of the boundaries of the different Balkan States, because, as you know, the feelings of the different Balkan nationalities towards one another are marked by considerable bitterness, and I have noticed, as probably most of you have, that all these States have partisans in this country, and that partisanship in this country as to the respective merits and claims of each of these States is almost as keen as are the passions of the several Balkan races. Therefore anything I could say here which might be supposed to be an encouragement of either Hellenic or Rumanian or Serbian or Montenegrin or Bulgarian or Albanian claims might incur the wrath of at least five of the six nationalities. I think it will be better, therefore, for those of us who venture to follow the President to keep upon the safer ground of commercial exits and of mountain lines to which he devoted so large a part of his very opportune remarks. He dwelt, and with great force and truth if I may presume to say so, upon the dominant feature of the whole Balkan Peninsula, namely, that its rivers do not run the right way. Its great streams, the Danube and the Save and the other western tributaries of the Danube, the Morava and others, all go into the Black Sea; and the Black Sea, unfortunately, is separated from the Mediterranean by the two narrow channels which have given, and are destined to give, so much trouble to statesmen and diplomatists, those of the Bosphorus and the Hellespont. The right thing would have been that, instead of that tremendous barrier of the Julian and Dinaric Alps running along the coast of the Adriatic, there should have been broad open valleys down which streams would flow southward and westward into the Adriatic; and that other streams further south should have flowed from Eastern Bulgaria across Macedonia into the Adriatic at its southern end, where it opens into the Mediterranean. Had that been the case, the lines of settlement would probably have followed the river-valleys. You would have had diverse nationalities, but there might have been fewer conflicts between those who own the coast and those who dwell on the hinterland than the conflicts which we see to-day. The only gap of any importance in the line of the Dinaric Alps is that through which the river Narenta descends a little north of Ragusa. Further south the Drin comes into the Adriatic a little to the south of Skodra (Scutari). Both of these pass through narrow exits, the northern very narrow indeed. The consequence is Serbia has been cut off from the Adriatic coast. If you take the voyage from Trieste down to Cattaro—and you cannot take a more interesting or beautiful voyage—you will be struck the whole way by this tremendous barrier of lofty mountains rising almost immediately from the sea, and with no large streams coming down from them except at one point. Curiously enough, at the base of the mountains one sees the subterranean discharge of the rains which have fallen on the other side of the mountains, and which have passed through immense limestone caverns before emerging close to the edge of the sea. At one spot a vast fountain comes out like a full streaming river suddenly arising out of the earth and flows in 100 yards down to the sea, which is very little lower. A more beautiful object than this great fountain of pure water rising from among the rocks can hardly be imagined. This isolation of Serbia and Bosnia from

the Adriatic is the real difficulty in the position of those countries. Although there was some little amount of suspicion and jealousy between the Serbs and the Italians at the beginning of the war over Dalmatia and its islands, there is now a prospect that when the war is over the Italians will find no difficulty in obtaining certain strategic points along the Adriatic where their fleet can have stations to give them safety in that sea, while at the same time the greater part of the coast will be allowed to go to the Serbs, to whom it belongs by race. There are, of course, cities like Zara and Sebenico where Italian is very largely spoken, but the country behind is practically all Serbian. I suppose that upon that basis arrangements could be made; and clearly Serbia would be well entitled to have the most complete assurances for effective communication to the sea from her inland territory down to the coast of the Adriatic. There cannot be a better founded claim, and Serbia will gain by the opening for her commerce and opportunities to develop her natural resources. That really would be more profitable to Serbia and more easily obtained politically than the extension of her territory down to Salonika, because it would give her a far better access to the Western Mediterranean instead of requiring her commerce to take the long and in winter and spring very stormy voyage down through the *Ægean* Sea, where the north-east wind blows with great violence through many months of the year, as the Greeks knew to their cost when they could not succeed in getting away from Aulis to Troy. The access to the commerce of the West would be really better through the Adriatic than down the coast of Greece. As regards the question of nationalities generally: the President observed with truth that unless you have travelled in these Balkan countries it is extremely difficult to realize the way in which different races are intermingled, and you cannot get an arrangement which would be satisfactory to all. In Bohemia, for instance, although it is generally true that there is a German ring along the north and west of Bohemia, the Czechs are mixed with Germans in many other places, and in Transylvania the three elements, Ruman, German, or as they call it Saxon, and Magyar, are so mixed that you could not give the country to any one of these three without a great deal of injustice to the rest. The Rumans, no doubt, especially in Eastern and Southern Transylvania, are the predominant element; but at the same time there are so many Magyars, especially Szekler Magyars in some places and so many Saxons in others, that the other two nationalities would put forward considerable grounds of complaint. Extremely careful arrangements will be needed for protecting smaller nationalities from arbitrary rule on the part of the larger nationalities to which any territory may be assigned. That is the difficulty you get as soon as ever you go far eastward in Europe. When one gets beyond Vienna mixed populations are found where it is almost impossible to make any arrangement which would be really satisfactory. In some cases the trouble is aggravated by differences of religion, not merely by differences of religion between Christians and Moslems as in the Turkish dominions, but also as between the Orthodox and the Roman Church, whose antagonisms in times past have been very bitter, although there they are now being happily appeased. There are a great many other points upon which the President spoke, and to only one of which I must attempt to refer: the scenery of Rhodope. There is the famous Bulgarian monastery of Rilo to the south-east of Sofia, not very far from the Bulgarian town of Samakov, lying in a lovely valley. You can imagine no more lovely mountain and forest scenery than one finds in the valleys which surround this monastery. The President made a few remarks about our old friend the Turk. He said he is an anachronism

in Europe. May I add to that that he is an anachronism everywhere? The Turk has made himself impossible. He is not fit to rule over any people of a different race. As a private individual he has some virtues, but as a ruler he is impossible. Instead of being satisfied with turning him as a ruler out of Europe, we should turn him out of any region where he can oppress Christian subjects. There are parts of the interior of Asia Minor where the population is mainly Moslem, and where there are comparatively few Christians to be massacred or tortured, and in those places a weak Turkish Sultan may be tolerated. The Seljuk Turks for a long time held rule in Konia, and if it is desired to keep a Sultanate going a Turkish Sultan might be planted at Konia, where he would do no harm and probably become a respectable member of society. Thus we should get rid of any power he might exercise over the Christians of Armenia to the east or over the Greeks on the west coast, or over the Christians and Moslem Arabs of Syria in the south, in which regions he has been signalizing himself by perpetrating shocking massacres. There is no happier or more peaceful part of the Mediterranean shore, nowhere have people lived with more comfort and happiness than in the Lebanon, for although it was nominally part of the Turkish Empire, it was under an administration in which the Turks did not take an active part. But as soon as the war broke out the Turks entered the Lebanon, they cut down trees, destroyed villages, beggared and murdered the people, so that over large districts few people were left alive. When I saw it four years ago it was the most prosperous and tranquil part of the Near East. These regions must be liberated for ever from the domination of the Turk, and I am glad to see in that connection that His Majesty's Government has recently expressed its sympathy with the idea of allowing Jewish communities to be settled in Palestine. They might restore prosperity to that country, which has also languished so long under the rule of the Sultan. I should like, if I may, to be permitted to express, on behalf of those of us who are endeavouring to feel our way on Balkan and Eastern questions and have realized how difficult it is to discover satisfactory solutions, the obligations we are under to you, Mr. President, for the light which you have been kind enough to give us to-night.

STUDY OF A DUNE BELT

W. J. Harding King

MOST striking features of the Libyan Desert are the curious long, narrow dune belts running across the desert, roughly from north to south, in almost straight lines. The Abu Moharik belt, which is one of the most conspicuous of these, has a length which cannot be much less than 400 miles; but though it varies somewhat in width the average breadth is probably not more than 5 miles, about an eightieth of the total length. These belts consist almost entirely of crescent-shaped dunes. In places these dunes are scattered and stand isolated from each other, with areas of sand-free desert between them. In other parts the dunes are more closely packed; many of the crescents join together to form large clusters; and the spaces between the dunes are also sometimes covered with sand.