

X. THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE, BRITAIN, AND RUSSIA

Section 1

In this chapter I propose to speculate a little about the future development of these four great States, whose destinies are likely to be much more closely interwoven than their past histories have been. I believe that the stars in their courses tend to draw these States together into a dominant peace alliance, maintaining the peace of the world. There may be other stars in that constellation, Italy, Japan, a confederated Latin America, for example; I do not propose to deal with that possibility now, but only to dwell upon the development of understandings and common aims between France, Russia, and the English-speaking States.

They have all shared one common experience during the last two years; they have had an enormous loss of self-sufficiency. This has been particularly the case with the United States of America. At the beginning of this war, the United States were still possessed by the glorious illusion that they were aloof from general international politics, that they needed no allies and need fear no enemies, that they constituted a sort of asylum from war and all the bitter stresses and hostilities of the old world. Themselves secure, they could intervene with grim resolution to protect their citizens all over the world. Had they not bombarded Algiers?...

I remember that soon after the outbreak of the war I lunched at the Savoy Hotel in London when it was crammed with Americans suddenly swept out of Europe by the storm. My host happened to be a man of some diplomatic standing, and several of them came and talked to him. They were full of these old-world ideas of American immunity. Their indignation was comical even at the time. Some of them had been hustled; some had lost their luggage in Germany. When, they asked, was it to be returned to them? Some seemed to be under the impression that, war or no war, an American tourist had a perfect right to travel about in the Vosges or up and down the Rhine just as he thought fit. They thought he had just to wave a little American flag, and the referee would blow a whistle and hold up the battle until he had got by safely. One family had actually been careering about in a cart--their automobile seized--between the closing lines of French and Germans, brightly unaware of the disrespect of bursting shells for American nationality.... Since those days the American nation has lived politically a hundred years.

The people of the United States have shed their delusion that there is an Eastern and a Western hemisphere, and that nothing can ever pass between them but immigrants and tourists and trade, and realised that this world is one round globe that gets smaller and smaller every decade if you measure it by day's journeys. They are only going over the lesson the British have learnt in the last score or so of years. This is one world and bayonets are a crop that spreads. Let them gather and seed, it

matters not how far from you, and a time will come when they will be sticking up under your nose. There is no real peace but the peace of the whole world, and that is only to be kept by the whole world resisting and suppressing aggression wherever it arises. To anyone who watches the American Press, this realisation has been more and more manifest. From dreams of aloofness and ineffable superiority, America comes round very rapidly to a conception of an active participation in the difficult business of statecraft. She is thinking of alliances, of throwing her weight and influence upon the side of law and security. No longer a political Thoreau in the woods, a sort of vegetarian recluse among nations, a being of negative virtues and unpremeditated superiorities, she girds herself for a manly part in the toilsome world of men.

So far as I can judge, the American mind is eminently free from any sentimental leaning towards the British. Americans have a traditional hatred of the Hanoverian monarchy, and a democratic disbelief in autocracy. They are far more acutely aware of differences than resemblances. They suspect every Englishman of being a bit of a gentleman and a bit of a flunkey. I have never found in America anything like that feeling common in the mass of English people that prevents the use of the word "foreigner" for an American; there is nothing to reciprocate the sympathy and pride that English and Irish republicans and radicals feel for the States. Few Americans realise that there are such beings as English republicans.

What has linked Americans with the British hitherto has been very

largely the common language and literature; it is only since the war began that there seems to have been any appreciable development of fraternal feeling. And that has been not so much discovery of a mutual affection as the realisation of a far closer community of essential thought and purpose than has hitherto been suspected. The Americans, after thinking the matter out with great frankness and vigour, do believe that Britain is on the whole fighting against aggression and not for profit, that she is honestly backing France and Belgium against an intolerable attack, and that the Hohenzollern Empire is a thing that needs discrediting and, if possible, destroying in the interests of all humanity, Germany included.

America has made the surprising discovery that, allowing for their greater nearness, the British are thinking about these things almost exactly as Americans think about them. They follow the phases of the war in Great Britain, the strain, the blunderings, the tenacity, the onset of conscription in an essentially non-military community, with the complete understanding of a people similarly circumstanced, differing only by scale and distance. They have been through something of the sort already; they may have something of the sort happen again. It had not occurred to them hitherto how parallel we were. They begin to have inklings of how much more parallel we may presently become.

There is evidence of a real search for American affinities among the other peoples of the world; it is a new war-made feature of the thoughtful literature and journalists of America. And it is interesting

to note how partial and divided these affinities must necessarily be. Historically and politically, the citizen of the United States must be drawn most closely to France. France is the one other successful modern republic; she was the instigator and friend of American liberation. With Great Britain the tie of language, the tradition of personal freedom, and the strain in the blood are powerful links. But both France and Britain are old countries, thickly populated, with a great and ancient finish and completeness, full of implicit relationships; America is by comparison crude, uninformed, explicit, a new country, still turning fresh soil, still turning over but half-explored natural resources.

The United States constitute a modern country, a country on an unprecedented scale, being organised from the very beginning on modern lines. There is only one other such country upon the planet, and that curiously enough is parallel in climate, size, and position--Russia in Asia. Even Russia in Europe belongs rather to the newness that is American than to the tradition that is European; Harvard was founded more than half a century before Petrograd. And when I looked out of the train window on my way to Petrograd from Germany, the little towns I saw were like no European towns I had ever seen. The wooden houses, the broad unmade roads, the traffic, the winter-bitten scenery, a sort of untidy spaciousness, took my mind instantly to the country one sees in the back part of New York State as one goes from Boston to Niagara. And the reality follows the appearance.

The United States and Russia are the west and the east of the same

thing; they are great modern States, developing from the beginning upon a scale that only railways make possible. France and Britain may perish in the next two centuries or they may persist, but there can be no doubt that two centuries ahead Russia and the United States will be two of the greatest masses of fairly homogeneous population on the globe.

There are no countries with whom the people of the United States are so likely to develop sympathy and a sense of common values and common interests as with these three, unless it be with the Scandinavian peoples. The Scandinavian peoples have developed a tendency to an extra-European outlook, to look west and east rather than southwardly, to be pacifist and progressive in a manner essentially American. From any close sympathy with Germany the Americans are cut off at present by the Hohenzollerns and the system of ideas that the Hohenzollerns have imposed upon German thought. So long as the Germans cling to the tawdry tradition of the Empire, so long as they profess militarism, so long as they keep up their ridiculous belief in some strange racial superiority to the rest of mankind, it is absurd to expect any co-operative feeling between them and any other great people.

The American tradition is based upon the casting off of a Germanic monarchy; it is its cardinal idea. These sturdy Republicans did not fling out the Hanoverians and their Hessian troops to prepare the path of glory for Potsdam. But except for the gash caused by the Teutonic monarchy, there runs round the whole world a north temperate and sub-arctic zone of peoples, generally similar in complexion, physical

circumstances, and intellectual and moral quality, having enormous undeveloped natural resources, and a common interest in keeping the peace while these natural resources are developed, having also a common interest in maintaining the integrity of China and preventing her development into a military power; it is a zone with the clearest prospect of a vast increase in its already enormous population, and it speaks in the main one or other of three languages, either French, Russian, or English. I believe that natural sympathy will march with the obvious possibilities of the situation in bringing the American mind to the realisation of this band of common interests and of its compatibility with the older idea of an American continent protected by a Monroe doctrine from any possibility of aggression from the monarchies of the old world.

As the old conception of isolation fades and the American mind accustoms itself to the new conception of a need of alliances and understandings to save mankind from the megalomania of races and dynasties, I believe it will turn first to the idea of keeping the seas with Britain and France, and then to this still wider idea of an understanding with the Pledged Allies that will keep the peace of the world.

Now Germany has taught the world several things, and one of the most important of these lessons is the fact that the destinies of states and peoples is no longer to be determined by the secret arrangements of diplomatists and the agreements or jealousies of kings. For fifty years Germany has been unifying the mind of her people against the world. She

has obsessed them with an evil ideal, but the point we have to note is that she has succeeded in obsessing them with that ideal. No other modern country has even attempted such a moral and mental solidarity as Germany has achieved. And good ideals need, just as much as bad ones, systematic inculcation, continual open expression and restatement. Mute, mindless, or demented nations are dangerous and doomed nations. The great political conceptions that are needed to establish the peace of the world must become the common property of the mass of intelligent adults if they are to hold against the political scoundrel, the royal adventurer, the forensic exploiter, the enemies and scatterers of mankind. The French, Americans, and English have to realise this necessity; they have to state a common will and they have to make their possession by that will understood by the Russian people, and they have to share that will with the Russian people. Beyond that there lies the still greater task of making some common system of understandings with the intellectual masses of China and India. At present, with three of these four great powers enormously preoccupied with actual warfare, there is an opportunity for guiding expression on the part of America, for a real world leadership, such as may never occur again....

So far I have been stating a situation and reviewing certain possibilities. In the past half-century the United States has been developing a great system of universities and a continental production of literature and discussion to supplement the limited Press and the New England literature of the earlier phase of the American process. It is one of the most interesting speculations in the world to everyone how

far this new organisation of the American mind is capable of grasping the stupendous opportunities and appeals of the present time. The war and the great occasions that must follow the war will tax the mind and the intellectual and moral forces of the Pledged Allies enormously. How far is this new but very great and growing system of thought and learning in the United States capable of that propaganda of ideas and language, that progressive expression of a developing ideal of community, that in countries so spontaneous, so chaotic or democratic as the United States and the Pledged Allies must necessarily take the place of the organised authoritative Kultur of the Teutonic type of state?

As an undisguisedly patriotic Englishman, I would like to see the lead in this intellectual synthesis of the nations, that must be achieved if wars are to cease, undertaken by Great Britain. But I am bound to confess that in Great Britain I see neither the imaginative courage of France nor the brisk enterprise of the Americans. I see this matter as a question of peace and civilisation, but there are other baser but quite as effective reasons why America, France, and Great Britain should exert themselves to create confidences and understandings between their populations and the Russian population. There is the immediate business opportunity in Russia. There is the secondary business opportunity in China that can best be developed as the partners rather than as the rivals of the Russians. Since the Americans are nearest, by way of the Pacific, since they are likely to have more capital and more free energy to play with than the Pledged Allies, I do on the whole incline to the

belief that it is they who will yet do the pioneer work and the leading work that this opportunity demands.

Section 2

If beneath the alliances of the present war there is to grow up a system of enduring understandings that will lead to the peace of the world, there is needed as a basis for such understandings much greater facility of intellectual intercourse than exists at present. Firstly, the world needs a lingua franca; next, the Western peoples need to know more of the Russian language and life than they do, and thirdly, the English language needs to be made more easily accessible than it is at present. The chief obstacle to a Frenchman or Englishman learning Russian is the difficult and confusing alphabet; the chief obstacle to anyone learning English is the irrational spelling. Are people likely to overcome these very serious difficulties in the future, and, if so, how will they do it? And what prospects are there of a lingua franca?

Wherever one looks closely into the causes and determining influences of the great convulsions of this time, one is more and more impressed by the apparent smallness of the ultimate directing influence. It seems to me at least that it is a practically proven thing that this vast aggression of Germany is to be traced back to a general tone of court thinking and discussion in the Prussia of the eighteenth century, to the theories of a few professors and the gathering trend of German

education in a certain direction. It seems to me that similarly the language teachers of to-day and to-morrow may hold in their hands the seeds of gigantic international developments in the future.

It is not a question of the skill or devotion of individual teachers so much as of the possibility of organising them upon a grand scale. An individual teacher must necessarily use the ordinary books and ordinary spelling and type of the language in which he is giving instruction; he may get a few elementary instruction books from a private publisher, specially printed for teaching purposes, but very speedily he finds himself obliged to go to the current printed matter. This, as I will immediately show, bars the most rapid and fruitful method of teaching. And in this as in most affairs, private enterprise, the individualistic system, shows itself a failure. In England, for example, the choice of Russian lesson books is poor and unsatisfactory, and there is either no serviceable Russian-English, English-Russian school dictionary in existence, or it is published so badly as to be beyond the range of my inquiries. But a state, or a group of universities, or even a rich private association such as far-seeing American, French and British business men might be reasonably expected to form, could attack the problem of teaching a language in an altogether different fashion.

The difficulty in teaching English lies in the inconsistency of the spelling, and the consequent difficulties of pronunciation. If there were available an ample series of text-books, reading books, and books of general interest, done in a consistent phonetic type and spelling--in

which the value of the letters of the phonetic system followed as far as possible the prevalent usage in Europe--the difficulty in teaching English not merely to foreigners but, as the experiments in teaching reading of the Simplified Spelling Society have proved up to the hilt, to English children can be very greatly reduced. At first the difficulty of the irrational spelling can be set on one side. The learner attacks and masters the essential language. Then afterwards he can, if he likes, go on to the orthodox spelling, which is then no harder for him to read and master than it is for an Englishman of ordinary education to read the facetious orthography of Artemus Ward or of the Westminster Gazette "orfis boy." The learner does one thing at a time instead of attempting, as he would otherwise have to do, two things--and they are both difficult and different and conflicting things--simultaneously.

Learning a language is one thing and memorising an illogical system of visual images--for that is what reading ordinary English spelling comes to--is quite another. A man can learn to play first chess and then bridge in half the time that these two games would require if he began by attempting simultaneous play, and exactly the same principle applies to the language problem.

These considerations lead on to the idea of a special development or sub-species of the English language for elementary teaching and foreign consumption. It would be English, very slightly simplified and regularised, and phonetically spelt. Let us call it Anglo-American. In it the propagandist power, whatever that power might be, state,

university or association, would print not simply, instruction books but a literature of cheap editions. Such a specialised simplified Anglo-American variety of English would enormously stimulate the already wide diffusion of the language, and go far to establish it as that lingua franca of which the world has need.

And in the same way, the phonetic alphabet adopted as the English medium could be used as the medium for instruction in French, where, as in the British Isles, Canada, North and Central Africa, and large regions of the East, it is desirable to make an English-speaking community bi-lingual. At present a book in French means nothing to an uninstructed Englishman, an English book conveys no accurate sound images to an uninstructed Frenchman. On the other hand, a French book printed on a proper phonetic system could be immediately read aloud--though of course it could not be understood--by an uninstructed Englishman. From the first he would have no difficulties with the sounds. And vice versa.

Such a system of books would mean the destruction of what are, for great masses of French and English people, insurmountable difficulties on the way to bi-lingualism. Its production is a task all too colossal for any private publishers or teachers, but it is a task altogether trivial in comparison with the national value of its consequences. But whether it will ever be carried out is just one of those riddles of the jumping cat in the human brain that are most perplexing to the prophet.

The problem becomes at once graver, less hopeful, and more urgent when we take up the case of Russian. I have looked closely into this business

of Russian teaching, and I am convinced that only a very, very small number of French-and English-speaking people are going to master Russian under the existing conditions of instruction. If we Westerns want to get at Russia in good earnest we must take up this Russian language problem with an imaginative courage and upon a scale of which at present I see no signs. If we do not, then the Belgians, French, Americans and English will be doing business in Russia after the war in the German language--or through a friendly German interpreter. That, I am afraid, is the probability of the case. But it need not be the case. Will and intelligence could alter all that.

What has to be done is to have Russian taught at first in a Western phonetic type. Then it becomes a language not very much more difficult to acquire than, say, German by a Frenchman. When the learner can talk with some freedom, has a fairly full vocabulary, a phraseology, knows his verb and so on, then and then only should he take up the unfamiliar and confusing set of visual images of Russian lettering--I speak from the point of view of those who read the Latin alphabet. How confusing it may be only those who have tried it can tell. Its familiarity to the eye increases the difficulty; totally unfamiliar forms would be easier to learn. The Frenchman or Englishman is confronted with

COP;

the sound of that is

SAR!

For those who learn languages, as so many people do nowadays, by visual images, there will always be an undercurrent toward saying "COP." The mind plunges hopelessly through that tangle to the elements of a speech which is as yet unknown.

Nevertheless almost all the instruction in Russian of which I can get an account begins with the alphabet, and must, I suppose, begin with the alphabet until teachers have a suitably printed set of instruction books to enable them to take the better line. One school teacher I know, in a public school, devoted the entire first term, the third of a year, to the alphabet. At the end he was still dissatisfied with the progress of his pupils. He gave them Russian words, of course, words of which they knew nothing--in Russian characters. It was too much for them to take hold of at one and the same time. He did not even think of teaching them to write French and English words in the strange lettering. He did not attempt to write his Russian in Latin letters. He was apparently ignorant of any system of transliteration, and he did nothing to mitigate the impossible task before him. At the end of the term most of his pupils gave up the hopeless effort. It is not too much to say that for a great number of "visualising" people, the double effort at the outset of Russian is entirely too much. It stops them altogether. But to almost anyone it is possible to learn Russian if at first it is presented in a lettering that gives no trouble.

If I found myself obliged to learn Russian urgently, I would get some accepted system of transliteration, carefully transcribe every word of Russian in my text-book into the Latin characters, and learn the elements of the language from my manuscript. A year or so ago I made a brief visit to Russia with a "Russian Self-Taught" in my pocket. Nothing sticks, nothing ever did stick of that self-taught Russian except the words that I learnt in Latin type. Those I remember as I remember all words, as groups of Latin letters. I learnt to count, for example, up to a hundred. The other day I failed to recognise the Russian word for eleven in Russian characters until I had spelt it out. Then I said, "Oh, of course!" But I knew it when I heard it.

I write of these things from the point of view of the keen learner. Some Russian teachers will be found to agree with me; others will not. It is a paradox in the psychology of the teacher that few teachers are willing to adopt "slick" methods of teaching; they hate cutting corners far more than they hate obstacles, because their interest is in the teaching and not in the "getting there." But what we learners want is not an exquisite, rare knowledge of particulars, we do not want to spend an hour upon Russian needlessly; we want to get there as quickly and effectively as possible. And for that, transliterated books are essential.

Now these may seem small details in the learning of languages, mere schoolmasters' gossip, but the consequences are on the continental scale. The want of these national text-books and readers is a great gulf

between Russia and her Allies; it is a greater gulf than the profoundest political misunderstanding could be. We cannot get at them to talk plainly to them, and they cannot get at us to talk plainly to us. A narrow bridge of interpreters is our only link with the Russian mind. And many of those interpreters are of a race which is for very good reasons hostile to Russia. An abundant cheap supply, firstly, of English and French books, in English and French, but in the Russian character, by means of which Russians may rapidly learn French and English--for it is quite a fable that these languages are known and used in Russia below the level of the court and aristocracy--and, secondly, of Russian books in the Latin (or some easy phonetic development of the Latin) type, will do more to facilitate interchange and intercourse between Russia and France, America and Britain, and so consolidate the present alliance than almost any other single thing. But that supply will not be a paying thing to provide; if it is left to publishers or private language teachers or any form of private enterprise it will never be provided. It is a necessary public undertaking.

But because a thing is necessary it does not follow that it will be achieved. Bread may be necessary to a starving man, but there is always the alternative that he will starve. France, which is most accessible to creative ideas, is least interested in this particular matter. Great Britain is still heavily conservative. It is idle to ignore the forces still entrenched in the established church, in the universities and the great schools, that stand for an irrational resistance to all new things. American universities are comparatively youthful and sometimes

quite surprisingly innovating, and America is the country of the adventurous millionaire. There has been evidence in several American papers that have reached me recently of a disposition to get ahead with Russia and cut out the Germans (and incidentally the British). Amidst the cross-currents and overlappings of this extraordinary time, it seems to me highly probable that America may lead in this vitally important effort to promote international understanding.