PEACE PLANNING FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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Peace Planning for Central and Eastern Europe
By Feliks Gross

TO THE question, what is the most essential issue in postwar planning for central and eastern Europe, the only correct answer is, the problem of federation. Whether or not a federation or a similar setup will be established is not clear, but this problem is the kernel of postwar planning as far as the central and eastern European region is concerned.

EARLY TENDENCIES TOWARD FEDERATION

The idea of federation is not a new one. It can be found far back in the history of central and eastern Europe, as far back as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The modern concept of close collaboration originated as early as 1848. The famous Czechoslovak statesman and historian, František Palacký, and the leader of the Hungarian revolution, Louis Kossuth, and his compatriot, Władysław Teleký, envisioned the necessity of such co-operation. To Kossuth, the realization came after he lost the fight against the Hapsburgs.

Within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, too, there were strong currents to transform the monarchy into a democratic federation. The Austrian Socialists in particular, such as Karl Renner (who wrote under the pseudonym of Springer) and Otto Bauer, tried to bring within the framework of the monarchy as much national autonomy as possible. In 1906, Aurel Popovici tried to present a plan for a transformation of the Austrian monarchy into a federal body. All these plans within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy pointed to two facts: first, that the nations which were under the Hapsburg yoke were struggling for freedom; second, that most of the statesmen, even those of the smaller nations within the monarchy, realized that if the nations were liberated, some kind of close co-operation among them was necessary to overcome economic and political difficulties.

This idea of close co-operation received new impetus from the great Czechoslovak statesman and thinker, Thomas Masaryk. Masaryk fought bitterly for the liberation of the small nations under Austro-Hungarian rule, but he realized at the same time that this liberation must be followed by a system of close co-operation among all the small nations in the area. He presented these ideas in his New Europe, written during World War I, and in the Philadelphia Manifesto of 1918 which he signed. After the Treaty of Versailles the nations which were under the Hapsburg monarchy were liberated, but a strong regional co-operation was not achieved. The only outcome was the Little Entente, a loose system including Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia.

The Little Entente was a system directed against Hungarian revisionist
tendencies but it had also a deep economic significance. Experience has shown that economic co-operation in this agricultural basin is necessary for all the countries of the Danubian region, and in the thirties such co-operation was really established. But when the heavy pressure from Germany came, neither the Little Entente nor the Polish-Rumanian Alliance proved strong enough to produce even the most elementary solidarity of the attacked and the menaced. Czechoslovakia was left alone; and even later, the nations in that region and in the Balkans did not comprehend the necessity for uniting to fight the common enemy—Nazi Germany. The ties proved to be very weak.

CONCEPT CLARIFIED BY WAR

After 1939, many of the representatives of the nations felt that this system of small national states in central and eastern Europe was one of the reasons why it was so easy for the Germans to subjugate this part of Europe. In the underground and in exile, in Paris, London, and New York, statesmen, journalists, soldiers, and scientists discussed widely the causes of defeat and the way toward a betterment of the situation. In the gloomy days of superiority of the German war machinery, many of the representatives of the nations came to understand how small were the differences and how petty the quarrels in comparison with what was going on in the occupied territories and in comparison with the German danger. The necessity for close co-operation was realized more and more. Now the plans and political thinking became clearer.

Until, let us say, 1940 there were plans and programs for some kind of international co-operation, more or less vaguely expressed in 1848, limited to the concept of transformation of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy before 1914, clear as a necessity for close regional collaboration in Masaryk's writings. Since 1940 the plans have become definite in their federal or confederal form of international co-operation in this area; the concept of a looser regional co-operation is accepted as an outcome of political reality.

The first sign of this was the Polish-Czechoslovak declaration issued on November 11, 1940, whereby both governments decided that after the war Poland and Czechoslovakia should form a confederation of states. The details were developed for a long time in Paris and then in London, and finally on January 23, 1942, a Polish-Czechoslovak agreement was signed concerning the formation of a confederation.

Simultaneously, the exiled governments of Greece and Yugoslavia worked on a Balkan union, reaching an agreement in London on January 15, 1942. Even some common institutions were outlined. This was greeted cordially by the confederated Poles and Czechoslovaks.

Another formal step in this direction was made on November 5, 1941 at the International Labor Conference in New York. The delegations from Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, and Yugoslavia issued a common declaration about central and eastern European regional solidarity. Consequently, in January 1942 the Central and Eastern European Planning Board of Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland and Yugoslavia was formed as a planning and research agency in New York. The first Steering Committee of the Board was composed of four members of the respective governments and a Secretary General.6

The formal treaties were not without backing and background. Articles and booklets were and are being written about this in the political centers of

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the United Nations by political emi­
grees. Speeches were delivered and
problems studied and discussed.

UNDERGROUND SUPPORT

In some countries, the underground
took an active part. In the Polish un­
derground press, the idea of a confed­
erated central and eastern European
region found wide support, from the
radical labor movement to the mod­
erates. In an article of an underground
Polish radical paper of January 21,
1942, commenting on the New York
declaration of November 5, 1941, we
read: “The federated Europe must be
composed of federated regions. The
central and eastern European confedera­
tion is regarded as a necessary step.”

Underground papers of other political
leanings, as Nowa Polska (“New Po­
land”) of July 1942 and Plomi ein
(“The Flames”) of January 1942, sup­
port this idea as strongly, although in
a different way. Wolnosc, Rownosc,
Wiepodleglosc (“Liberty, Equality, and
Independence”), a radical, democratic
underground paper issued in Poland, in
an article of February 28, 1941 written
in favor of federation, stated: “Only
the old concept of international soli­
darity, which respects everybody’s na­
tional differences but which nevertheless
accomplishes common aims and causes,
can form the new hope of Europe.”

Many other underground editorials
are being written in the same strain,
stressing security and economic prob­
lems as those which must be committed
to a federation. On November 19,
1942, at the Polish National Council
(which is a kind of Polish parliament
in exile), representatives of the Polish
Labor Party and the Polish Peasant
Party jointly presented a project on
postwar Poland. The entire project was
prepared in the Polish underground by
delegates of both of these groups, and
transmitted to London through under­
ground channels. In this project, the
basic premise of Poland’s foreign policy
is the formation of a federation of the
central and eastern European states.7

EXTENT OF FEDERATION

What should be the extent of the pro­
posed federation? There is no one plan.
Rather, there are some plans, and they
depend largely on the political realities.
Broadly speaking, there are three possi­
bilities. The first is the formation of a
large federation composed of Greece, Al­
bania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania,
Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and
Poland. The second introduces two fed­
eral groups, the southern composed of
Balkan States and the northern com­
posed of the rest. The third proposition
envisages a northern group of Czecho­
slovakia and Poland, a middle Danubian
group of Austria, Hungary, and Ruma­
nia, and a southern, Balkan group.

Certainly, the idea of federation
gained in importance when the two
democratic leaders of Czechoslovakia
and Poland—Eduard Benes and Wlad­
yslas Sikorski respectively—identified
themselves with the plans. Eduard
Benes, in his original plan, envisaged
that with the passage of time, a natural
bridge would be established between
the northern (Czechoslovak-Polish) and
southern (Balkan) confederations, and
that this would be the logical step to­
ward the consolidation of all of central
Europe and of the whole of Europe.

Sikorski, in his plan, saw one large
federal grouping. He presented this
idea in the United States during his last
trip and published it in Collier’s maga­
zine.9 But in the meantime, the po­
litical situation has changed and the

7 “Program for People’s Poland,” Polish La­
bor Group, New York, 1943.

8 Eduard Benes, “The Organization of Post­
war Europe,” Foreign Affairs, Vol. 20, No. 2

9 Wladyslas Sikorski, “Poland Wants a To­
tal Peace,” Collier’s, April 3, 1943.
prospects of a federal settlement have declined. It was a point of discussion by some whether the formation of more federal groups in this area would not be a more acceptable solution.

Next to the governments, the underground movement, and the Central and Eastern European Planning Board (which confines its studies to economic, social, and educational problems), perhaps the most important planning group of central and eastern Europeans is the Danubian Club in London. This group is composed of leading radical and left-wing persons of almost all central and eastern European countries. Among them are some prominent peasant and labor leaders. On September 21, 1943, the Danubian Club issued its plan of a Central and South-East European Union. The club worked out this plan in two commissions, one constitutional, the other economic. It was the general opinion of both commissions that a single union comprising all the abovementioned countries is the most desirable, but should this be unattainable, smaller unions should be formed. In the latter case, the smaller unions should be integrated with each other as far as possible.

CONSTITUTIONAL ASPECT

Next to the problem of the extent of the proposed region is the constitutional problem. Certainly the difficult nationality problems in this area preclude a classic federal system such as that in the United States. It should be, rather, some kind of an organization taking patterns from the United States, the Swiss confederation, and the British Commonwealth of Nations, and applying them to the local situation.

The Polish underground, in a paper which discussed the "Program for People's Poland," pleaded for a close union on the pattern of the United States. An interesting project is presented in the Danubian Club plan. The project contemplates the creation of a political system based on two chambers, a government of the union and a presidency. The first chamber of the union, or, as the authors call it, the "Council of the Union," should consist of deputies elected on the basis of one deputy for a given number of citizens throughout the union. The second chamber, called by the commission "Council of the States," would contain an equal number of representatives of each member state, appointed by the government of such state. In this way, in the first chamber a common platform could be formed for main political groups—for instance for the peasant or labor parties of the whole region; and in the second chamber the interests of the states would be defended. The government should deal with foreign affairs, foreign trade and customs union, finance and taxation, currency credit, exchange and banking, transport, policies of economic development, collective security, and some other functions. According to this plan, the presidency should be a rotating office.

Somewhat different plans were presented earlier by the Polish diplomat, Anatol Muhlstein, and later on another plan by the former Czechoslovak Prime Minister and agrarian leader Milan Hodža appeared. Both plans are based largely on Austro-Hungarian experience. Hodža, especially, had long experience within the Hungarian Parliament and drew some conclusions from it. Muhlstein proposed that the federal-
tion must possess legislative, executive, and judicial organs necessary for the exercise of its functions. Its legislative body, called by him "federal senate," should be composed of delegates of the federated states. The delegates (senators) should be elected by the national parliaments of the respective states. This reminds us, in some respects, of the parliamentary delegations in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

Hodža brings forth some interesting ideas in his project. Among others, he proposes a federal Ministry of Co-operation. This should be a special body which should act only to encourage co-operation among the member states and to strengthen mutual friendship and understanding.

ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

Economic reconstruction on a regional basis in this area has attracted even more attention. There are also many plans drawn for the region as a whole, in industry and in agriculture.

The main issue is the agricultural problem and the problem of surplus population. In most of the area, agriculture is still backward, and it is an area of peasant economy. In some countries, a land reform is essential. Land reform here means breaking up of large estates and consolidation of small holdings. As far as Poland is concerned, all political parties in the underground, perhaps with minor exceptions, acknowledge the necessity for a radical land reform which would constitute a continuation of the one carried out in Poland in the interwar period, which was not sufficiently far-reaching. The labor movement, in particular, in its program for a People's Poland, promulgates: "Agrarian reform. The great landed estates will be expropriated and turned into land reserves for parceling. These expropriated estates will be placed under the supervision of communal and district committees for land reform." 15

But land reform does not solve all problems. It must be followed by an adequate economic development. Agriculture itself will need improvement. There are plans to shift the agriculture in certain areas to protective foods. Peasant co-operatives which were already successful in this area are regarded in all plans as a basic system for economic development in respect to mechanization of agriculture and increase of milk production and food industry. Finally, proper progress in agriculture needs cheap electricity. Plans are being made among the eastern European experts in London for electrification of the whole area of central and eastern Europe on a regional basis, and the TVA is cited as an example to be imitated eventually.

An economic and political program of the peasantry was formulated by the peasant leaders of the central and eastern European countries in London in July 1942. It is one of the most important documents on this subject. This program in general contemplates the above-mentioned lines of reforms in ag-


15 "Program for People's Poland," Polish Labor Group, New York, 1943.
griculture, and is based on the regional concept of a peasant central and eastern Europe. It stresses as basic: peasant ownership, agricultural co-operation, agricultural credit and insurance, stability of prices, agricultural improvements, agricultural education, rural welfare, and industrialization.\textsuperscript{16}

Industrialization is needed in this area to raise the standards of living and to give employment to a large surplus population. Before the war, there were in the villages many people who made a subnormal living. They were unnecessary for agricultural production, but could not find employment elsewhere. According to a Polish economist, J. Poniatowski, at least one-third of the agricultural population of Poland could be withdrawn from agriculture without reducing production. Egoroff for Bulgaria and Bicanic for the Croatian part of Yugoslavia have come to the conclusion that, on an average, one-third of the agricultural population represents a surplus which is in fact a burden for the stage of development already attained by agriculture, and prevents its further advance.\textsuperscript{17}

Most of the experts agree that emigration alone cannot solve the difficult population problem in this area. They agree also, mostly, that even a radical land reform and improvement of agricultural output will not be able to ab-

\textsuperscript{16} The “Peasant Program” was resolved upon in London on July 9, 1943. The signers of the program are: Bulgaria, Dimitre Matzankeff; Czechoslovakia, Ladislav Feierabend and Jan Lichner; Greece, Vrasidas Capernaros; Hungary, Michael Karolyi and Arnold Daniel; Poland, Stanislaw Mikolaicyzk and Witold Kulerski; Rumania, Pavel Pavel; Yugoslavia, Rudolph Bicanic and Francis Gabrovsek and Milan Gavrilovic. See \textit{New Europe} magazine, Nov. 1943.


sorb the whole surplus population. Industrialization is, then, regarded as a means of solution, and some groups in London and New York are working out plans in this direction.

\section*{Educational and Social Reconstruction}

The plans for postwar reconstruction in central and eastern Europe embrace also the educational and social fields.\textsuperscript{18} Culture and education have been cruelly destroyed, and educational and cultural reconstruction forms a big problem. The Central and Eastern European Planning Board in particular was active in this respect. A general plan of educational reconstruction in this area is envisioned by Vojta Beneš,\textsuperscript{19} an outstanding Czechoslovak expert in education. Plans of student and professor exchanges and mutual help in educational reconstruction were widely discussed in a special institute at New York University in April 1943, organized by the Central and Eastern European Planning Board, the United States


\textsuperscript{19} Op. cit. n. 18 supra.
Committee on Educational Reconstruction, and New York University.\(^{20}\)

Furthermore, it is accepted as a basic principle that this federation can be organized only as a democratic and progressive union. Because of this, an equalization of social standards is needed as Jan Kozak rightly points out.\(^{21}\) A peasant country in eastern Europe could hardly unite with one ruled by big landowners, as, for example, the present Hungary. Therefore, the introduction of socially progressive democratic patterns is needed in the whole area to form a true democratic federation.

A further development in this direction would probably also need some adequate plans regarding regional organization of social security systems,\(^{22}\) and a proper adjustment of living standards.

**Success Depends on Great Powers**

As one can see from this short survey, the planning activities for this area are quite prolific and often imbued with enthusiasm and good will. But the materialization of this project does not depend only on the nations involved and on the planners. It depends on the political realities which are determined in foreign policy, above all by the three big powers, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. A favorable approach to a regional federal project in Europe was clearly expressed by Winston Churchill in his speech of March 21, 1943,\(^{23}\) in which he gave his support to the idea that the small nations should form a grouping of states or confederation. The Soviet Union, which would be the nearest neighbor of such a confederation, forms a very important factor here. There is no official statement in this respect, but an opinion is expressed in a Moscow periodical, *War and the Working Class*,\(^{24}\) where an unfriendly attitude to any federal idea in Europe is taken by the author, Mr. Malinin.

A democratic and progressive federation of central and eastern Europe could never be hostile towards the Soviet Union. Moreover, it would form an important bridge between the Soviet and western Europe. In such a federation with Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, the attitude of friendship and collaboration would prevail. Moreover, it must be stated that there are good reasons to expect a Polish-Soviet friendship. Perhaps no nation in Europe finds more interest and understanding in Russian culture than the Poles. There is no hatred between the peoples. On the contrary, there is sympathy and understanding, with exceptions on both sides. When the political difficulties are overcome, the path will be open for a complete understanding. Then such a federation would become a real bridge between western Europe and the greatest continental power—the Soviet Union; a bridge for peace and friendly co-operation.

**Necessity for Collaboration**

No definite decisions have been taken as yet. Let us hope that some kind of federal, or at least regional, collaboration will be established in this area. It is the only solution. Otherwise a milky

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\(^{21}\) Jan Kozak, “America and the Postwar World, Our Relations with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe,” *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*, Dec. 1942.


way of small national states hidden behind high tariff walls and emotional resentments must be expected.\textsuperscript{26} Peaceful, regional, federal collaboration in this area would be a great achievement of historical importance. Such a region as a member of a European Council and International World Organization would be an element of peace. But this historical achievement cannot be based only on diplomatic agreements and plans prepared by experts. It must be an outcome of real collaboration of the common people; it must be based on solidarity of peasants and workers—the essential democratic element in this area. And the greatest hope for this idea is that the longing for it is coming from the tragic darkness of the European underground.


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