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An analytical survey of the research project presented by the Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals

By Fannie Fern Andrews, Ph.D.

The research proposed by the Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals envisages a study in the field of international relations. This is a timely and necessary undertaking. Students of world problems who have watched the international drama, following its course from one crisis to another, speculating in each case on the immediate outcome of the particular problem, find themselves today confronted with an international emergency, involving a series of issues fraught with potentialities which, many people believe, constitute the most serious menace to world peace since 1914.

In these grave circumstances, some of the responsible statesmen of the world have been quoted as advocating the need of a "world-wide inventory of international relations." This is exactly what the Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals has planned to do—though not with the implements employed by governments. It is time, we are convinced, to take our bearings, and this clearly means a search after fundamental causes. We are endeavoring to discover, for example, the forces which govern the policies of each nation in its international contacts. What, we ask, are the motives which actuate these policies? These, we think, are revealed through the national characteristics, which fashion the national mentality, for obviously a nation acts as its mentality prompts.

The plan of this Committee contemplates a wide and thorough study. The comprehensiveness of the matter circumscribes its scope. It is not the aim of the Committee to try to solve any particular problem or to sway opinion through any of the processes of propaganda. That is not research in the pure sense of the term. Neither does the
project envisage a mere academic inquiry by a group of experts who conceive their mission fulfilled in the building up of a new mass of knowledge, interesting and important as that might be, but lacking in real usefulness for those who come face to face with the many-sided world problems. The Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals, composed of American research workers and foreign collaborators as well, is undertaking to provide accurate and practical knowledge, to present it intelligibly, and to make it accessible to all who would benefit by its use.

The Committee holds to the view that unbiased knowledge of a problem normally points to a solution. And this is especially true in an international conference which is composed of mentalities of different types and varying degrees of tension. The critical onlooker regards the modern international conference as a mixture of confusion and misunderstanding. And to support his thesis, he recalls the transactions of the most recent of such gatherings, — the Economic Conference at London and the Disarmament Conference at Geneva. Not that the subject of economics nor the matter of armaments, by themselves, contain such mysterious and incalculable devices which could cloud the brains of those experienced statesmen. The confusion lay, in the case of the Economic Conference, at least, in the different interpretations applied by the sixty and more delegates, representing as they did, as many national goals and outlooks. Each presented his own case through his own eyes, so that the real problem was to discover what those eyes saw. Who knows, in such an assembly, what are the objectives of a nation except that nation itself? Herein is found the chief source of misunderstanding which is always a potential cause of conflict, for every international disagreement is basically a conflict of national interests and national mentalities.

Ramsey MacDonald clearly expressed, in his opening speech at
the London Conference, what he perceived to be the difficulties, inherent in a Conference of many national minds. "How easy it is," he said, "for an international Conference to be buried in technical details, and at the same time confused by those who can see the problems of the world only through national spectacles, and in terms of exclusive national interests."

But this was only one cause of the confusion, we might say to Mr. MacDonald. It is true that the delegates guarded their own national interests; that is why they were sent to London. But the main trouble was, as intimated above, that nobody, except the delegate himself, knew what his nation's objectives were. There was, therefore, as Mr. MacDonald implied, little if any regard for the other fellow's interest, and much less, indeed, for the welfare of the world as a whole. How, in the circumstances of such inadequate knowledge, could these delegates, representing so many divergent and conflicting national goals, center their efforts on the solution of world problems for the general welfare? Nationalism ruled the conference, and it failed in its high aim.

"Scrupulator" was right. "It was too much to expect," says this writer, "a complete conversion of the world's mentality from a nationalist to an international basis, nor in America the only country in which this process of conversion has stuck half way."

It is not that the "conference method" has failed, as many people believe. The difficulty with the Economic Conference at London lay in the preparation for the Conference; and this goes much farther back than the labors of the Preparatory Commission. Their comprehensive and forward-looking statement of basic economic principles, coupled with the solemn charge to the governments "to devise the necessary guarantees of political and economic international order," fell far short of the mark. The world knew too little about itself. There was no conception of the force of those deep-rooted national characteristics and mentalities which
lay behind the motives which governed the action of each and every delegate at the Conference.

Until these matters are better understood, with the emergence of a more sympathetic understanding of each nation's point of view, there will be no substantial desire to work for the general welfare, as Mr. Macdonald would like to have seen at London. He understood this also when Mr. Lloyd George asked him whether any agreements would be taken with regard to war debts in the conference with President Roosevelt at Washington, Mr. Macdonald responded that he did not contemplate any agreements. "First," said he, "we must sit down together and understand each other. Then if the whole field of problems can be explored in four days some good will be done. I expect Mr. Roosevelt will talk candidly of his own difficulties, and I certainly shall talk with friendly candor of the difficulties which would have to be faced in this country."

The question of the international conference, which obviously includes the permanent conference of the League of Nations, offers merely one illustration of the need of fundamental study of the world question from the point of view of ideals and objectives.

With the aim of clarifying the meaning of the terms mentality, national outlooks and national goals, as used in this project, certain members of the Committee have made some interesting observations. President Compton, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, sees in science a potent means of determining differences in individual and national outlooks. He says:

"in no way are the outlooks and mental processes of peoples more clearly differentiated than by their scientific outlooks. The author of a scientific treatise in India quotes as real, the results of experiments which were never performed, not because he is dishonest, but because his form of idealistic philosophy treats the idea as the reality and not the behavior of Nature as indicated by experiment. The Mexican villager kills the American ornithologist because of a rumor that his hidden object is to kidnap Mexican children to distill from their bodies lubricating oil for
airplane engines. The Russian, with a second hand knowledge of science, looks to its applications to bring economic and political freedom. In the Western World science and its applications have run ahead of man's capacity for social and economic re-adjustment and the outcome is not yet clear.

"These illustrations suggest the impossibility of international understanding and cooperation without a much more widespread and sympathetic understanding of each others' points of view than exists at present. It is probably a valid assumption that the first step to improve the situation must be an understanding of it, and this is the prime object of the Proposed Research."1

Dr. Isaiah Bowman, Chairman of the Department of Geography, supports the principle of regional synthesis and declares that it "affords a method of approach that partakes of the very essence of the problem, namely to arrive at an understanding of some of the leading characteristics and motivations of the different nations of the world."2

So also, in his discussion of the regional interpretation and application of international law, Dr. Edwin D. Dickinson, Chairman of the Department of International Law, lecturing at The Hague Academy in 1932, mentions some deeply rooted influences which circumscribe a nation's attitude toward general principles of international law.

"Without consciousness of bias," he says, "a general principle of international law may be interpreted and applied in one way in a nation old in years, in another way in a nation of exuberant youth; in one way in a nation of monarchic traditions, in another way in a nation which idealizes democracy; in one way in a nation welded in the bitter heat of wars, in another way in a nation whose soil has rarely known the tread of hostile feet."3

1. See Exhibit 1- Significance of the Proposed Research Study by the Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals from the Standpoint of Science.

2. See Exhibit 2- Plan for an Atlas of International Relations, etc.

3. See Exhibit 3, Chapter 1- The Interpretation and Application of International Law in Anglo-American Countries.
The following quotation from one who has profoundly studied conditions in Russia emphasizes the necessity of knowing the mentality of a country when making any serious effort to understand its motives and actions: "In considering the development of a great nation, it is obvious that attention must be given to the mentality of its people. The world has been so long accustomed to look upon Russia as an integral part of Europe, that it has attributed to the Russian people the same qualities of thought, the same capacity for organization, that attaches to other European peoples. It is obvious that this was erroneous."

Likewise, no one can understand the actions of Japan without knowing the portent of the divine origin idea. This is the basis of the militaristic attitude of the nation to-day; it defines the moral code, and in fact influences every activity in the Japanese life. This national tradition interprets the amazing pronouncements of Japan which are now puzzling the rest of the world.

Further, those acquainted with China's problem well know that the failure of China to weld herself into a national entity is due to the fact that nationalism is contrary to the mentality of the Chinese people. The modern movement to make a Chinese nation is constantly being checked by the lure of classical China, with its four thousand years of local traditions.

And so we might proceed: Each national entity, wherever found, lives in its own dramatic history; seethes in national ardor; and struggles to achieve its coveted goal according to its own mentality.

The inquiry proceeds in historical sequence. Its scope covers all departments of human relationships, which combine to mould the national mentalities. There is to be close integration of results of the research in the fields of history, political science, social institutions, education and religion. In fact, during the work of making the studies in these different disciplines, the process of
Integration will run through the whole scheme.

Some historical questions, for example, as Dr. Langer intimates, can be treated most effectively by scholars outside the political field. "We need," says Dr. Langer, "the aid of the psychologist in determining the value and importance of popular ideas like the Yellow Peril, Encirclement, Revenge, the White Man's Burden, etc."

While Dr. Munro, speaking for the political scientist, claims "an urgent need for studies which will reach beyond the field of political science as commonly understood and explore the closely related forces which hitherto have been exclusively within the domain of the economist, the anthropologist, the psychologist or the sociologist."

We might recall in this connection Walter Bagehot's well-known saying: "But political philosophy must analyze political history, it must distinguish what is due to the excellence of the people and what to the excellence of the laws."

Dr. Dickinson declares: "I think it most important that International Law should be studied in intimate connection with studies of the geographical, historical, political, economic and social factors which have largely determined its development and content."

Writing in similar vein, Dr. Lingelbach says: "The great need of thoughtful study by a group of scholars interested not only in research in their own particular field of the social sciences but in the integration of the results with special reference to their bearing on international relations is evident."

So, too, Dean Furniss, in a skillful interpretation of what he considers to be the relation of his Department of Social Institutions to the general program, states: "The work of this Division will be in a very real sense supplementary to that of the other Divisions. As the Inquiry is organized, certain blocks of social institutions are to be investigated..."
by the research staffs of other Divisions; for example, the economic, the political, the governmental, the educational and the religious institutions of the different countries. This form of organization is unquestionably advantageous from the point of view of the effectiveness of the Inquiry as a whole; and the activities of the Division of Social Institutions should conform to the general plan of organization. This implies that many of the specific lines of investigation undertaken by the Division of Social Institutions will be determined for it by the needs of other branches of the Inquiry. It is impracticable to formulate these portions of our research program in advance. They should develop out of the group conferences of the Chairs of the various Divisions."

In the practical application of the geographical program to the general plan, Dr. Bowman believes that, "it may prove useful," not only, as he says, to the Department of Geography, but to the other Departments as well, "to submit the findings of the other departments to the Geography Department." This would, he thinks, benefit both groups, in that it would assure the proper representation of the regional point of view, especially important, he points out, for the Departments of History, Economics and Social Institutions; and at the same time, he explains, it would provide the Geography Department "with data necessary for its own conclusions." And in line with this suggestion, he states that, "a careful division of labor should be decided upon at the outset." To illustrate, it "should be determined," he says, "which among the several Departments mentioned should study such subjects as population distribution and trends, mineral resources, export trade, and territorial development."

And, finally, as one scans the Technique, prepared by Dr. Angell, one finds, running through the entire program, the principle of coordination as it should be applied to an economic study in a
research project of this magnitude.

It is a moment in history when such a staff of scholars, seized on the motive of discovering and spreading knowledge for the betterment of human kind, becomes jointly responsible for a definite piece of research of world-wide scope. "If the necessary funds can be obtained for running the boilers," says Dr. Robert A. Millikan, "then will obviously be worth while for as many of us as have any experience or capacity to direct the power generator in useful and constructive ways to exert ourselves to the utmost to that end."

Dr. John L. Metcalfe, President of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, declares the idea presented in this great program is, I believe, one of the most important in the whole field of human interest, and represents a great responsibility in constructive thought."

Only the real scholar can perform this task. It is a long process, needing discriminate judgment and courage. But it should be undertaken now; the gravitas of the hour demands it. Whither is the world going? Let the scholar — the multiple scholar — answer the question.

Research, as every knows, is costly. So is a confused and helpless world. The Committee on National Outlooks and National Goals is asking to be fund in its great but humble undertaking. The research done by the Committee and the money contributed for its progress will make a different contribution for world recovery — and, may we hope, for spiritual regeneration of the world.