

TO be read again

SECOND
PRIZEA F Daniel

A very good appreciation
of his author's trees. He should
not look for originality in the
subject. Probably he will
end up in the Alphas. (This
in the first reading) AB

For Good Reading

Improve a second reading
though his ending is the
weakest part of his. I would
put him at X- AB

Further first by a narrow margin for

(1) I. L. Muller

(2) J. H. Shabby

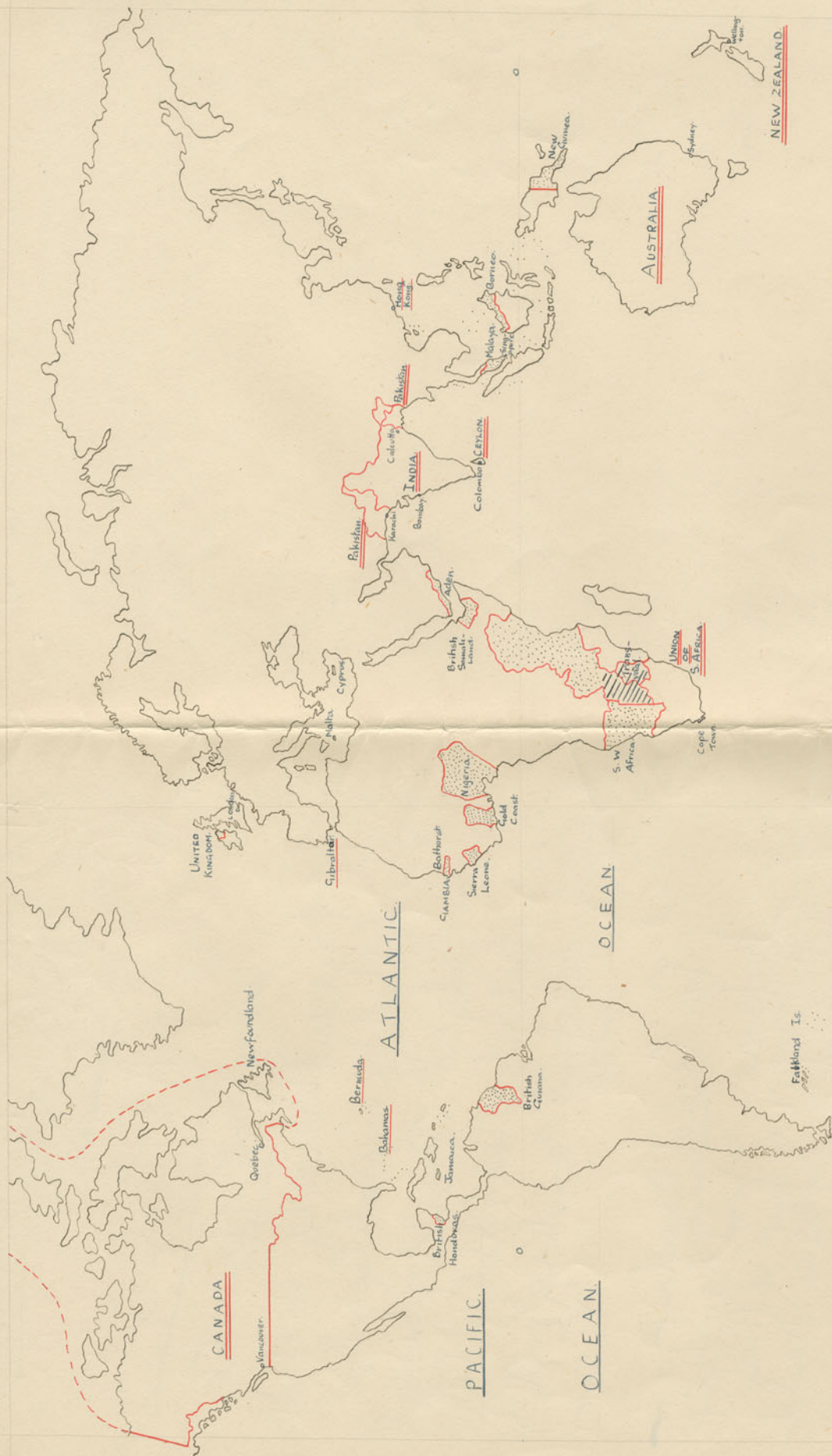
(3) P. P. Phillips

all of these

place AB

(4) Other unworthy

at X- AB



THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH & EMPIRE

Dominions & Self-governing Colonies underlined:
 Colonies, Protectorates, & Trust Territories:

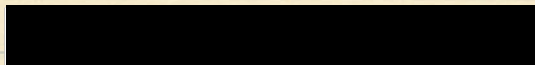
(Gall's Projection)

South African High Commission Territories:
 Other Areas underlined:

name

ALEC EDWARD DAVIES.

date of birth.



address.

7, TYDFIL STREET, BARRY, GLAMORGAN.

school.

BARRY BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Summary.

(a). Origins of the Colombo Conference.

(b). What took place at Colombo. - decisions reached
(The Colombo Plan).

(c). The Problems: (i) Poverty of South East Asia.
(ii) Communist peril.
(iii) Problem of defence.
(iv) Problem of racial relationships.

(d). The Opportunities: (i) External cooperation - common foreign and defence policies.
(ii) The potential value for the future of inclusion of new 'Brown' Dominions.
(iii) Economic cooperation - the Colombo Plan.
(iv) Extension of cooperation - outside the Commonwealth to the United States of America, & possibly, France & the Netherlands.

(e). Conclusion. - hope for the future, - flexibility of the Commonwealth organisation.

The Colombo Conference of 1950 as illustrating the Problems and Opportunities of the British Commonwealth to-day.

At the Prime Ministers' Conference of October, 1948, it was agreed that a meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers should be held in Ceylon at the earliest possible opportunity. For several years past Commonwealth affairs have been dealt with largely by the Prime Ministers themselves holding meetings. This arrangement has much to be said in its favour, so long as the Prime Ministers are available for conferences outside their own countries. However, in practice these Prime Ministers' meetings, effective though they are, have taken place much less frequently than circumstances have made desirable. Therefore, the trend of recent years to move some responsibility from the heads of Governments to other ministers is a timely one, and was made full use of, firstly in a meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers in London, July 1949, and then in the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Conference at Colombo. Colombo was a happy choice of meeting place, for as capital of one of the newest Dominions, Ceylon, it was not only a convenient site for most of the Commonwealth Ministers to reach, but it also stood as neutral ground between the two other new Dominions, India and Pakistan (so long divided over the Kashmir question). Thus the conference, which lasted from January 9th to 14th, 1950, was the first of its kind that has taken place in

Commonwealth history.

As was generally expected the conference itself dealt largely with foreign affairs, that is relations with communist China, and with economic questions, centering mainly round ^{the} economic position & future of certain South East Asian areas within the Commonwealth. As a whole the Commonwealth has great potential resources, but each individual country, some more than others, has serious economic problems confronting it. In its line of action the conference pursued a project whereby each member concerned could contribute to a pool of help, and out of the discussions emerged the great Colombo Plan for cooperative economic development in South and South East Asia.

Poverty in this area of the world involves with it a vast scale of problems, not the least of which is the growth and spread of communism. Here lives one sixth of the world's population, for the most part agricultural, and existing in abject poverty. But these people have lived in such poverty for centuries, long before the British came, and it is not easy to undo the work of centuries. The poverty of these people provides ideal conditions for social unrest and even violence, and the position was greatly aggravated by the last war.

The main cause of this poverty lies in low productivity, for the regions in which it is most acute are primarily agricultural. The production of food is not proportional to the size of the population. With China and

(3)

India included, half of the world's total population live on one sixth of the world's land area. This ^{is} disproportion would have less significance if most of the land was fertile, cultivated, and high yielding. But the fertility of the soil falls short of even the lowest average standards of the world. In the tropical regions, where the land is most fertile, it is largely uncleared jungle and the amount that is under cultivation is very small in relation to the number of people who try to live off it. Not only this but their main staple is rice, and as Mr. Malcolm Macdonald said, 'if rice fails, all else fails in this part of the world.' (at Singapore, November 22nd, 1950).

A monsoon which arrives a little too early or late, as they often do, is disastrous for crops, and widespread famine results.

Poverty in this region is therefore a major world problem. The Colombo Plan, with its six-year development programme, will attempt to relieve it & raise the standards of living of these people. However, it is made more difficult by a rapidly increasing population. For every nine mouths to feed before the last War, there are now ten, and it is estimated that the number of people is increasing by about 20,000 every day.

Most of the countries concerned still maintain ancient civilisations, and are fundamentally rich in nature's endowments. Yet their economic progress remains almost static. However, custom and tradition have a lot to do with this condition of mass inertia and fatalism,

(4)

and also the Oriental mind has a deep distrust of Western influence.

Embarrassment
Cultural
Contentment

Closely bound up with this problem of poverty and production is that of the steady advance of Communism. Communist agitators find fertile land for their propaganda in the masses of discontented natives who populate this impoverished region of the world, and there is no lack of evidence to prove this. Even in Great Britain poverty attracts agitation. In my own part of the country, South Wales, Communism has steadily lost ground in the mining valleys since the beginning of the period of full employment. In South East Asia itself, Malaya and, outside the Commonwealth, Indo-China are examples of areas seriously threatened by active Communist opposition.

not 'rain'

Think she
has left her
self won
to wrangle
out of this
embarrass-
ment.

However, besides the danger to Malaya, which is a British responsibility, there is a very grave threat to the sub-continent of India & Pakistan, and also to the non-Commonwealth states of the area, which besides Indo-China are Burma, Siam, and Indonesia. These countries, nearly all newly independent, are in a state of highly sensitive nationalism, suspicious of anything looking like 'colonialism' or 'economic imperialism' and are very conscious of any threat to their recently won sovereignty. For example, India has made it clear that ^{she} would maintain her neutrality at any cost in a major conflict between China and the West. But here, and in Ceylon and Pakistan, Communism has been seriously weakened by the feeling that subservience to

(5)

Moscow makes it anti-national. There is also here, of course, a very strong religious element and a very small industrial proletariat. These two factors do not make for a natural communist tendency. But the threat remains. Economic conditions in East Bengal make a favourable breeding ground for discontent, and in western Pakistan there is a strong Marxist element among the writers and students, who have, however, been a traditional source of trouble in modern Asia. In Ceylon twenty-three seats out of a legislative chamber of a hundred are held by communists, but as these are split into Stalinist and Trotskyite groups, their antagonism has so far been amongst themselves. Therefore inside the sub-continent communism is nowhere a major menace as yet. But the threat from outside is a menace, and possible aggression, which from a strategic and military view would not be extremely difficult (for India could be starved out by overrunning the relatively weak states of Indo-China, Burma, & Siam which comprise the 'rice bowl of Asia' and thus withholding supplies from India which no other source can supply adequately), and this is not out of the question.

But, at present, Malaya is the only Commonwealth country where communism is internally active and dangerous. Here banditry is rife, and the mixed population helps to confuse matters. The Malays themselves, however, feel almost entirely that the communist rebellion is an attempt by aliens to gain control of their country, and they treat it

7

(6)

with contempt, many of them actively helping the British Government to suppress the rebels. For the Malay peasant-proprietor Marxism has, as yet, little meaning.

But the danger lies not only to the Asian countries. Farther south, beyond Indonesia, lies the vast and important Dominion of Australia. With the South East Asian countries in a precarious position regarding defence, the southern Dominion lies exposed to any large force which might sweep down from the north.

This position inevitably leads to a consideration of the problem of Commonwealth defence. This issue is indeed one of the most urgent facing the Commonwealth today, and it is intimately linked with ~~with~~ the question of sea-power, the unifying link now as ever. The problem of defence is, as shown at the Conference, that the Commonwealth cannot really find a common defence policy which is acceptable to all the various members. So long as national interests are not threatened, the Commonwealth is prepared for common action in the face of common interests. But the attitude of India is an example illustrating the difficulty of defining 'common interests.' Perhaps one may, in this case, discern the racial question. People of English stock such as Australians feel a natural allegiance to England and have a strong wish to uphold the Commonwealth tradition. But in the case of the 'coloured' nations (which now constitute a majority within the Commonwealth), especially those which are now self governing, this feeling is not present, and they tend to regard the Commonwealth as a mere protection for their interests.

1. This is the only one to have this all important point.

Indians are not prepared to make themselves being different.

This is beyond the facts. India remains the Commonwealth because she needs protection for it.

7

but they struggle to
batter about the scene -

to ask why should they bother about the English, an entirely alien people. Burma, now completely outside the Commonwealth, is an example of how deeply this almost anti-British (or, more accurately, anti-imperialist) feeling can help to go.

Pyman is
also too
anxious for
help to go.
behind
(of military
matters)

Thus the problem of a defence policy remains unsolved. It has always posed a serious question, ever since the time when Great Britain was solely responsible for her Empire. In the last half century or so, since the Commonwealth has come into being, common action & policy have never been agreed upon, except perhaps during the two World Wars. The question is closely linked with the relative decline of sea power. The Royal Navy is no longer undisputed mistress of the seas, and indeed the battleship is becoming slowly, but nevertheless surely, obsolete, giving place to submarine and aeroplane. The question remains open and disputed, as, for example, does common recognition of Communist China, up to now observed only by Britain herself, India, Pakistan and Ceylon out of the Commonwealth countries.

Within the Commonwealth itself one of the (most) dominating problems is that of colour, and though the Colombo Conference was mainly concerned with foreign policy, this question cannot be overlooked if one is to consider the problems of the British Commonwealth today. The matter is related to the question of freedom of migration within the Commonwealth. This internal migration is particularly important to the Commonwealth

This is
indeed
your
subject

(8)

because of the vast areas of thinly populated country and the equally vast areas of dense over population. The difficulty is illustrated by Australia's 'white' policy, which forbids the settlement of coloured people in Australia.

However, the main colour problem facing the Commonwealth today is that of Indians. There are some three millions of them outside India, mostly in Ceylon, East and South Africa, Hong Kong, the West Indies, and Mauritius. Their position is grave only in South Africa, where, unfortunately, a strong colour bar already exists between the Africans and whites, and relations between the whites, the Indians, and the Africans themselves have been very strained for many years.

The Indians are segregated by every social means that can most wound their human sentiments, but in spite of this they have demonstrated unmistakably that they regard South Africa as their home. The existence in this part of the world of historical memories, and the presence of so many natives naturally make colour prejudices acute, but the present policy of the South African Government does not attempt to allviate the tension. This position does not encourage social content, and provides communist propagandists with fruitful material for agitation. Indeed, a solution to this most complicated problem is more than vital to the peaceful development of the Commonwealth.

During the four hundred odd years of its

what does
this mean?

(9)

growth, the Commonwealth has developed into an extremely complex and varied political unit, and the greatest political problem facing it is that of achieving united and effective action. This, as shown at the Conference in the discussions on a common defence policy, is a contentious question. Many solutions have been suggested, such as proposals for developing consultative councils, for federal union, and so on, but none has found widespread support. But, the fact that a meeting of foreign ministers was held is a stride forward in the direction of achieving the much desired common foreign policy.

The Commonwealth's cooperation in external policy is the only practical solution to the major problems facing it today, particularly with regard to poverty and, with it, the threat from communism. The Commonwealth is very largely a community of nations working together to try and realise certain broad aims in the field of international affairs, and where great issues are involved, they ^{or} nations do attempt to work in common with one another. This cooperation depends upon consultation, carried out mostly by correspondence, but supplemented by personal meetings and conferences, as at Colombo. At the Conference the members agreed not to aim at a common policy as such, but they would try, through consultation, to secure agreement on at least the [greatest] essentials. Such agreement must be on the right lines, and if this is to

Simply this
is
Internal

(10)

to be achieved it seems as if the elaboration of Commonwealth representation overseas should be utilised even more so than at present. There are new opportunities for discussion in which many points of view, non-existent a decade ago, can be expressed. The addition of India, Pakistan, and Ceylon to the number of fully independent Dominions should now enable the Commonwealth as a whole to grasp a better understanding of the mind and politics of Asia in a way which was hitherto not possible. These new advantages place before the Commonwealth new opportunities, which must be utilised to the full.

From the Colombo Conference many lessons can be learnt about the essentials of Commonwealth cooperation in the future, for it illustrated how complex the field of foreign policy within the Commonwealth has grown since the last War. Cooperation is vital for the Commonwealth if it is to remain as the greatest link of the non-communist world, and the first concrete step forward is the Colombo Plan to help the development of South East Asia. The Commonwealth Governments took the lead in helping this region, and it shows the beginning of a great new venture in democratic planning. What is more important a truly realistic approach has been adopted. The recent decision of the United States Government to assist in the achievement of the Plan illustrates the opportunities offered by Commonwealth cooperation. It has a 'stain of oil'

4. February
Gain
Interpret
Area
W.U.N.O.

I should
say that
'Democracy'
has
nothing
to do
with
it.

character about it, and the decision to join the organisation is most encouraging. The six-year development programmes of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and the colonial territories of the region require external finance to the order of £1,000 million, and after Commonwealth resources have been fully tapped, there will remain a gap of some £500 million. The United States is the only country with the resources to make good so large a deficiency.

The main business of a conference of officials now meeting at Colombo will be to make recommendations on the future shape and membership of the central organisation. The execution of the programmes is a matter for the individual governments of the region, but if the active interests of the West, which is an indispensable element, is to be maintained through the years, there must be at least an organisation to report on progress towards the general objectives. How many countries should join is a matter of some delicacy. South East Asia cannot afford to go without the technical help which countries like France and the Netherlands could offer. On the other hand no progress will be made except through an organisation which wins the confidence of the Asian states already taking part or those, Indonesia, Burma, Siam, and the states of Indo China, which are still standing on the brink.

The re-armament programmes of the western countries will cut into their capacity to provide equipment

All this
rather
obscure

(12)

for transport, power, and industry in South East Asia. Yet they will have to adhere steadily to the long view. They have a vital stake in the stability of the new states in the East.

The opportunities of the future are inevitably going to be hedged with difficulties. Some of these have been indicated. Yet it is well to stress also that the post-war development of Commonwealth relations forms a sure basis of hope that these will be overcome. The Commonwealth's chameleon-like character through the ages illustrates that to the full. Indeed, perhaps the most significant fact about the Colombo Conference is that the inspiration for summoning it emanated from a sturdy branch, Australia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH AND WORLD SOCIETY.

— R. FROST (Ed.)

THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE NATIONS — by NICHOLAS MANSERGH.

AN EXPOSITION OF EMPIRE — by C. E. CARRINGTON.

THE BRITISH FAMILY OF NATIONS. — by JOHN COATMAN.

Also:

'THE WORLD TODAY,' JANUARY, 1950

VARIOUS ARTICLES FROM:-

- (1). 'Commonwealth Review.'
- (2) The 'Listener.'
- (3) The 'Round Table.'
- (4) The 'Times'

AND:

'NEW HORIZONS IN THE EAST' (H.M.S.O.)