

America's Destiny

THE PHILOSOPHY OF AMERICAN HISTORY, by Morris Zucker. Two volumes. I. *The Historical Field Theory*. 685 pages. II. *Periods in American History*. 1,054 pages. Arnold-Howard Publishing Company. Single volume \$4.50; two volumes \$8.50

THE first of these two amazingly erudite volumes by Dr. Zucker deals with what he calls the Historical Field Theory. Though he does not define this rather cryptic phrase until he reaches the last paragraph in his book (p. 685), he tells us in the preface that it is an adaptation to the field of history of the "great physical theories of the electro-magnetic field as developed by Einstein into the Relativity Theory" (p. vii).

The argument is that history is as truly a science as physics or astronomy, even embracing the element of predictability; and that "the events of history are the result of social forces operating in a definite historical field through aggregates of different social potentials which constitute the social continuum and by mutual interaction determine (sic) the nature of the social structure" (p. 99).

As Carlyle would have said, here is something to ponder on! The author's defense of his thesis that history is and must be a science if it has any meaning at all is a vigorous polemic against a long list of historians, philosophers and sociologists: Marx, Beard, Spencer, Spengler, Wells, Dewey, Barnes, Nevins, J. T. Adams, Robinson and a dozen others. Buckle alone seems to him to have grasped the truth that the facts of history can be generalized into universal law, and to that distinguished author of the "History of Civilization in England" Zucker pays extraordinary tribute, crediting him with having written some of "the noblest lines ever conceived by the human mind."

The second volume of Dr. Zucker's work tests the validity of his thesis by its application to American history. He divides our history into four parts: The Colonial Period, The Period of Expansion, The Period of Industrialization and The Period of Nationalization, attempting to prove that in each of these periods the events of American history followed the inevitable course marked out by the antecedent causal forces. He fills over a thousand pages with the details of our history, not always

presented with logical sequence. In the end he leaves us with the feeling of having had such a surfeit of historical narrative that we find it difficult to relate the facts to the initial assumptions of the theory.

Yet Mr. Zucker gives us a positive directive in his "Theory of the Continuing American Revolution." That great event he ranks with Magna Charta in its historical significance. The American Revolution was inexorably prepared by the century and a half of colonial history which preceded it, and even by the social factors which characterized the English evolution in self-government for centuries before. It was as inevitable as the growth of peonage in New Spain or feudalism in New France. Moreover, he says, the social forces unloosed by the great Revolution have not yet run their course, but are gathering scope and effectiveness by the very nature of the democratic institutions which were then brought into being. We shall, he believes, witness in our own time the fruition of the process, and "the great America of the twentieth century will blazon the path for a distracted world as did the similarly great America of the eighteenth century" (p. vi.).

World Plans Criticized

IN his concluding chapter on "The Next Twenty Years" (pp. 998-1054), a chapter in which he often rises to rare heights of eloquence, he warns us that practically all the plans and projects for a better world which are now being put forward in such bewildering variety are utterly inadequate, because they are the product of minds which have not grasped the meaning of democracy. That meaning would become clear if we once understood that our history is governed by scientific causal laws as surely as the operations of nature are so governed. Then we would cease to live on hand-to-mouth expedients and feeble compromises with an economic system which has served its time and is on the way to extinction. We would realize that "of all the great World Powers the United States now stands forth as the nation possessing the suitable material resources combined with the ideological background to make the deliberate choice for democratic nationalization" (p. 1052).

So enthusiastic is Mr. Zucker in his conviction of the noble role reserved for the American people by virtue of their inherited mate-

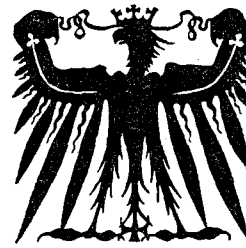
rial strength and ideological endowment that he is unduly harsh on honest thinkers who have not attained to his own clear vision of the scientific diagnosis of social forces. Such epithets as "demagogical," "platitudinous," "phrase mongers," "professorial cant" (Wilson's), "cultural persiflage" (Robinson's), rank nonsense" and "nit-wit intelligentsia," to mention only a few of Dr. Zucker's indictments, are unbecoming in a work of such sustained excellence.

Prophecy for U. S. A.

ONE may not be persuaded of the soundness of Dr. Zucker's thesis of the assimilation of the historic field to the scientific field. But one must respond with a glow of emotional consent to his prophesy of what is in store for our nation if its leaders embrace "the unparalleled opportunity for the fuller unfoldment of the forces released by the American Revolution" (p. 1034). The closing sentences of the book are a paean to the future of America: "We shall transform these United States into a paradise on earth. We shall replenish the depleted soil, dam up our wild-flowing streams, reforest the denuded hills and fill the countryside with comfortable homes abounding with the material things for a rational life and the opportunity to enjoy them. . . . The laughter of little children will once again resound with the plenitude of a young land upon which so strangely has descended the ancient, awesome curse of sterility. . . . America will bloom like a garden again in a world saddened by want, by unnecessary strife, by individualistic ambition which feeds upon the deprivation of his fellow men. . . . To such a world America will say—Brothers of men, children of the common earth, this is the way to the everlasting life of the human spirit. Come, join with us, and let us strive together to attain to the fuller knowledge of that unknown yet ever-living Presence which is the essence of blessedness on earth."

DAVID S. MUZZEY.

The writer who signs this review is the leader of the Society for Ethical Culture, professor emeritus of history of Columbia University, and former Carnegie lecturer on American history in Paris, Edinburgh and Prague.



Poland is not political parties or Lublin Committees or London governments, but men whose hearts can be broken or filled with hope. This book tells the story of the Polish men and women who have lived through five years of war solely to make Poland into a humane, democratic state which will decide for itself who shall govern it. These are the people whose hearts now hang in the balance. This is their book, and only through them can you understand a nation for which Britain went to war and which is today dividing allies. \$3.00

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A Plan for "Peasant Europe"

CROSSROADS OF TWO CONTINENTS—A Democratic Federation of East-Central Europe, by Feliks Gross. Columbia University Press. 162 pages. \$2.00.

THERE are two Europes, a French author says. Dr. Gross deals with peasant Europe, which occupies a middle position between Asia and industrialized Europe, at the crossroads of two continents. This peasant Europe extends from the Baltic to the Aegean, comprising Poland and Greece, as well as the countries in between. It is inhabited by a medley of nationalities, and has not been able to settle down into strictly delimited national states.

This Europe is rich in mineral resources, water power and oil. It is very rich in agricultural resources, but very poor in industries, though rich in industrious people. In the global picture it occupies a central position from which the main transportation lines of the Old World radiate in all directions.

The tragedy of this Europe is that it has long been a *place d'armes* for defense and offense. Great powers have continually attempted to break into it, to avail themselves of its manpower and natural resources. This was Germany's main "*lebensraum*"—a Wotan-sent gift at the very doors of the Reich, a potential colonial empire that could be reached overnight by train.

In the past this zone provided much of the explosive material that set the world afire from time to time. And in the future its role is bound to be important.

Dr. Gross clearly sees that peace will shun the Old World unless the explosive material is removed from this danger zone. The answer to the problem is a type of federation that would be fully integrated with the entire European system. There must be what the author provocatively calls "integral federalism"—cultural, social and economic federation on a democratic basis. The days are past when political and economic democracy could be considered as separate entities.

Such an East-Central European Federation must maintain friendly relations with the United States, Great Britain, and above all with the Soviet Union.

The Soviets are bound to loom larger than ever in this region after the war. Dr. Gross quotes a Russian author who expressed disapproval of any federation along the Soviet's western boundary. That disapproval, however, was expressed several months ago. Then the

Russians feared that such a union would be a new edition of the "*cordon sanitaire*" set up after World War I to keep them isolated from the non-Communist world.

Today the Russians are in a position to dictate their terms, so that there can no longer be a question of a "*cordon*." Any federation would contain the Soviets' close friends, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia; it is unthinkable, Dr. Gross points out, that a union of which these nations were integral parts could be anti-Soviet. "On the contrary, such a federation would be a wall of defense for Russia against further pressure by Germany on the east."

The federation must be born of the will of the people themselves, and Dr. Gross is right in saying that it is impossible to anticipate that will as yet. Central Eastern Europe is in ferment, and almost anything may happen there.

The author reviews the various proposals for federation. The most ambitious of these plans would embrace the entire region, from the Baltic to the Aegean. A second plan envisages the formation of a northern and a southern federation, the latter including the Balkan countries, with the exception of Romania. A third plan would divide this zone into a northern, a southern and an intermediary region, the last of which would follow the line of the Danube from Austria via Hungary to Romania.

This is a thoughtful book, well documented with a rich selection of appendices covering the most important phases of the recent history of this region. The book also contains a first-class bibliography and some easily comprehensible maps.

Dr. Gross, who is editor of *New Europe*, and an important figure in the labor movement of his native Poland, has performed a public service by focusing attention on the solution of the problem of the "crossroads of two continents."

EMIL LENGYEL

Dr. Lengyel is at present on the teaching staff of the School of Education at New York University, and is an outstanding authority on Central Europe and the Balkans. Born in Budapest, Hungary, he was an active newspaper man in Europe before World War II, and is the author of several important books including *The Danube* and *Turkey*.