

variations in the demand for service, there are few roads that could ever be abandoned entirely. Some essential demand always exists for the service of the least efficient road. Railroad service cannot be shipped about the country like steel or oil. Complete plants must remain in existence in all territories. The result of this fact is that, under present divided ownership and control, rates must be kept high enough to produce a surplus even for the marginal companies under all conditions. If any company becomes insolvent, it cannot gracefully leave the field for others to exploit. If we were to rely on "economic law" to solve the transportation problem, we should be beset by higher rates, lower wages, and more dangerous lapses of service than in the case of the manufacturing industries. Indeed, troubles of this kind face us now. This is particularly true in the matter of service, rates and wages being subject to at least some regulation.

The question business men and others should ask themselves is whether, confronted by the choice between a national railway system and increased private railway initiative, the American public will undergo the hardships incidental to the latter alternative. Will people wait for the weaker roads gradually to break down and approach bankruptcy? Will they pay the high rates necessary

in the meantime? When the crisis arrives, will they always find someone ready to step in and rehabilitate the damaged property? The chances seem slim indeed. In the case of railroads the public is compelled to take an active interest in sound financing, consolidated ownership and efficient management. It cannot retreat to the morass of private initiative in any hope that competition will improve the situation. The plain fact is that the old theories of private enterprise do not work in transportation, no matter what fears of "socialism" or "governmental inefficiency" may be entertained.

Would it not be more shrewd to turn forward and attempt to unravel the knot by collective plan? How can the crushing burden of capitalization be scaled down? How can the necessary new capital be furnished most cheaply and safely? How can morale be improved? How can operation be made more efficient? How can the large economic wastes be eliminated? There are many reasons for believing that some form of nationalization will furnish the answers. We need not turn to the worst type of bureaucratic control. Surely American organizing genius is capable of devising a national railway system which will retain the best features of private initiative without its absurd confusion.

GEORGE SOULE.

The Balkan Powder Magazine

THE sudden quarrel between Italy and Greece, based on the assassination of the Italian members of the Albanian frontier commission, serves to remind the world how easily a crisis may be precipitated in Southeastern Europe. Before the news was twenty-four hours old, more than one commentator was writing anxiously of the parallel between the present situation, and that which followed the assassination at Sarajevo and produced the Great War. Students of Balkan affairs, however, did not need Mussolini's defiant ultimatum to be apprehensive of the situation in the Near East. The status quo in the Balkans has long been a matter of a delicate balance, which once lost would inevitably bring war. The complexity of the situation has been increased since the Bulgarian revolution and the assassination of Stambulsky which followed it with such ruthless promptness.

Despite the fact that questions of foreign politics played little or no part in the Bulgarian revolution, the situation produced by it has ever since been fraught with danger. In the Balkans, politics are for the most part the affair of a small minority with a Western or semi-Western education, and are extremely personal in character. That

was how the political life of modern Greece and Bulgaria began, and in both these states the demoralizing effects of the European War have shown themselves particularly in a reversion to their earlier political conditions from which the two nations had been just beginning to extricate themselves. We must therefore look in the first place to the personal factor for an explanation of what has occurred. This accounted for the fall of Venizelos in 1920; and probably for that of Stambulsky in 1923, greatly though the two men differ in training and character.

Certainly, in Bulgaria, as in Greece, there has been plenty of fuel to feed the flames of personal vendetta. The entry of Bulgaria into the European War in 1918 was the signal for Stambulsky to be consigned to prison, and he was accounted lucky to escape with his life. The capitulation of Bulgaria in 1918 signified in internal politics a change of places as between the imprisoned and imprisoning politicians. Mr. Stambulsky bequeathed his cell to his predecessors in exchange for their portfolios, and it is only natural that the victims of the moment should have brought the wheel round again full-circle at the earliest opportunity.

The personal factor is therefore the principal key to the politics of Sofia, as of Athens, Belgrade, Bukarest and Angora, but it will not, of course, unlock the whole mystery. The gulf between the tiny minority of Westernized townspeople and the mass of unsophisticated workers on the land is indeed a very real and a very fundamental fact in the present stage of Near Eastern social history. Mr. Stambulisky had made the interests of the peasantry his battle-cry, a thoroughly sound policy, in a country where the workers on the land so vastly outnumber those in the towns. The political ascendancy of the urban minorities is proving unstable even in western Europe and America. In the Near East it depends on a monopoly of that Western culture and technique in which these countries now live and move and have their being, and the monopoly will inevitably disappear as soon as the rural masses either cast out Occidentalism or are assimilated by it. Stambulisky stood for a first essay of the Southeast European peasant to enter into his kingdom. The movement has had its other exponents and champions in neighboring countries. Mr. Radick in Croatia is one, and there are analogies in Rumania. The fall and assassination of Stambulisky cannot permanently arrest its march, but at the same time it shows that this movement is still in its infancy. Apparently, the average peasant still takes a lay leave of his brother who dons the black coat of the politician, and leaves him to take his chance in a dubious and unintelligible trade, even if peasant rights are the cause which he professes.

Thus the Revolution originated primarily in personal and secondarily in social conflicts, but not in the relations between Bulgaria and her neighbors. Unfortunately, however, there is a practical connecting link in the shape of the Macedonian refugees. The new Government has disclaimed any connection with this element; but it is improbable that such an important political force as the Macedonian organization would abstain from the struggle for political power. The Macedonians, who are bona fide nationalists with a particularly good cause, to which they have sacrificed their individual lives and fortunes courageously, had the best reason to hate Stambulisky, who was doing his best to sacrifice them, cause and all, for a higher and more far-sighted policy of Southeast European reconciliation. Down to the moment of Stambulisky's overthrow, the Macedonians were the only element in Bulgaria that was openly defying him. Most of the bourgeois leaders were securely lodged within their walls. The Macedonians, on the other hand, were contumaciously levying taxes and conducting the government in the districts adjoining the southwestern frontier.

Even if the Macedonians and the present Sofia Government were really strangers to one another, the contrary would be assumed by the government at Belgrade, and this adversely affects the internal

political development of Yugoslavia, on the issue of which the future relations of all the Southeast European nations to one another very largely depend. When Stambulisky still appeared absolutely secure in the saddle, Pashich and the Serbian centralists seemed to be in process of subjection by the Yugoslav revolutionists under the leadership of Mr. Radick. A defeat of Mr. Pashich and his policy before Stambulisky's death would have done much to strengthen the position of the latter. If and when Yugoslavia turns into a federal state, what is now Serbian Macedonia is almost bound to become one of the autonomous members; and since the amount of autonomy accorded to each member would presumably be the same, and the Slovene and Croat units would insist on the free play for their respective dialects and cultures, what is now Serbian Macedonia would on that day become as Bulgarian in its official life as it is already in the speech and aspirations of its inhabitants. In other words, the province which has hitherto been a bone of contention between Serbia and Bulgaria would become a bond of union between Bulgaria and a federalized Yugoslavia. An autonomous Macedonia would in effect be a Bulgarian unit in a Yugoslav federal state, and it would become an open question whether the Bulgarian national kingdom could not be brought on the same terms into the same association.

The dénouement of the internal crisis in Yugoslavia was forestalled by the revolution in Bulgaria. Had Mr. Stambulisky survived to see a victory by Radick his Macedonian policy would have been justified of its fruits, the two peasant statesmen would have understood one another, and the Bulgar and Croat, who have never been neighbors and therefore never enemies, would have come to terms. The new Bulgarian government could not do better than to carry on the foreign policy of Stambulisky and play a waiting game, leaving the destiny of Macedonia to the issue of the conflict between Zagreb and Belgrade.

But will the Macedonians allow the government at Sofia a free hand? It is no use expecting them to be long-suffering. All that they know is that their old enemies the Serbs are still holding them down by force and planting Serbian colonists in their country. They will naturally seize any chance that offers of forcing their fellow-countrymen of the Bulgarian kingdom to intervene in their favor, as they have so often done before. There is thus a very real danger from the side of the Macedonian emigres. But even if they neither make nor prepare a move, it is equally possible that Belgrade may take the initiative, on the calculation that the war cry of "the Bulgarian danger" is an excellent red-herring to draw across the path of constitutional reform in Yugoslavia. On the pretext of insecurity on the frontiers, internal questions might be postponed, and the grant of autonomy to Macedonia possibly averted.

Serbia will struggle hard to keep Macedonia as an integral part of herself, even if she is forced to give way elsewhere—partly from the human dislike of disgorging the spoils of war, and partly because a Serbian unit which included Macedonia would still be the leading state in the Yugoslav federation, while a Serbia hemmed in between an autonomous Croatia on one side and autonomous Macedonia on the other, might find herself relegated to a secondary position. The situation precipitated by the Bulgarian revolution is thus hazardous from every point of view.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE.

Death and the Lady

Their bargain told again

Death to the Lady said
While she to dancing-measure still
Would move, while beauties on her lay,
Simply as dews the buds do fill,
Death said: "Stay!
Tell me Lady,
If in your breast the lively breath
May flicker for a little space,
What ransom will you give to death,
Lady?" he said.
"O not one joy, O not one grace,
And what is your will to my will?
I can outwit parched fancies still."
To Death said the Lady.

Death to that Lady said,
When blood went numb and wearily,
"In innocence dear breath you drew,
And marrow and bloom you rendered me,"
She said: "True"
"How now Lady?"
"My heart sucked up its sweet at will,
Whose scent when substance' sweet is past,
Is lovely still, is lovely still,
Death," she said.
"For bones' reprieve the dreams go last:
Soon, soon your flowery show did part,
But precious I cull the heart,"
Death said to the Lady.

Death to that Lady said:
"Is then not all our bargain done?
Or why do you beckon me so fast
To chaffer for a skeleton
Flesh must cast,
Ghostly Lady?"
"For, Death, that I would have you drain
From my dead heart the blood that stands
So chilly in the withered vein.
And Death," she said,
"Give my due bones into your hands."
"Beauties I claim at morning-prime,
But the lack-lustre in good time."
Death said to the Lady.

LÉONIE ADAMS.

CORRESPONDENCE

Can France Reduce Its Standing Army?

SIR: A recent issue of The New Republic contains an editorial note regarding a rumored agreement between France and Great Britain, to the effect that, on the latter power's undertaking to furnish 200,000 troops in case of attack by a third power, France was going to reduce her army by an equal number of men.

The writer of the note in your journal expressed doubt that the British Premier would sign any such undertaking. I see no reason why he should not do so if such a desirable consummation as a cut of such proportions in French armaments could be reached. The reason why such a reduction is impossible is due to quite other causes. Readers of American newspapers recently learned that the strength of the French army has been fixed at 460,000 men (I only take metropolitan troops into consideration, not those in the French colonies and overseas possessions). They think that if the French could be induced to cut down this number the cause of peace would be served.

The keynote of the existing organization is that every Frenchman able to bear arms is a soldier from his twentieth to his forty-fifth year. He passes from the active army into the reserve army and later into the territorial army. With an active army of 460,000 men doing eighteen months' service the annual contingent of recruits is about 300,000 men. In twenty-five years (the period each man serves) the country is thus able to accumulate a total fighting force of 7,500,000 men. Allowing for deaths and for men who, with the years, become unfit for military service, we can count on at least 5,000,000 men. This is the armed strength, the real fighting force of the country when attacked.

A reduction of the French active army by 200,000 men would mean that during twenty-five years the total defensive force of the French nation would fall from 5,000,000 to 2,500,000 men. How could any offer of 200,000 men by Great Britain, if France were attacked, compensate her for abandoning half of her defensive force? If the 200,000 British troops were only the first installment to help to guard the French frontier and if the British government undertook to mobilize a couple of million British reservists to replace those France had sacrificed then the situation would be a logical one.

The only other remedy is that all the nations of Europe should abandon the whole conscription system (invented by the Germans over a century ago) and should go back to professional standing armies. Before the Scharnhorst system wars were merely a kind of glorified ordeal by battle. Each country sent out an army, rarely exceeding a quarter of a million men, and agreed to abide by the issue of the conflict. As a consequence countries quickly recovered from the short and sharp collisions of their professional armies. National pride and prestige suffered, but the nations were not "bled white" as they are under the modern system.

Similar results could be obtained by a gradual reduction of the active armies. If the French active army could be steadily reduced by 30,000 men a year, in ten years the number of men with the colors would be reduced to 160,000. It is difficult to say by what means these 160,000 could be recruited. The conscription of 160,000 out of a possible annual "classe" of 300,000 would be very difficult under a régime of republican equality, especially as they would have to be passed into the reserve and territorial armies, thus forming a special class of citizens more burdened than the others.

The solution that will ultimately be found will probably be the creation of *two armies*, one a professional one about 250,000 strong to act as the *armee de couverture* with a reserve of every able-bodied citizen who, on reaching his twenty-first year, would be given a military training of six months. The fact that the latter-day French army already contains a professional element 100,000 strong and that it is proposed gradually to reduce the period of service in the active army (already cut since the war from three years to eighteen months) gives ground for believing that this will ultimately be the solution of the military problem.

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