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CHANGING PATTERN OF ECONOMIC POTENTIAL FOR WAR--GEOGRAPHY

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SPEAKER--Dr. Rollin S. Atwood, Office of Intelligence Research,
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GENERAL MCKINLEY: Ladies and Gentlemen, we are very fortunate this morning to have with us Dr. Rollin S. Atwood, who is Assistant Chief in charge of Economic Research, Division of American Republics Research, Office of Intelligence Research, Department of State.

During World War II Dr. Atwood served for two years as Assistant Commercial Attache in Ecuador, returning to Washington in 1944 to carry out duties in connection with economic policy determination and intelligence research.

Dr. Atwood has taught geography in several universities and has written extensively on the subject. He is a member of many learned societies. This morning his subject is "Changing Pattern of Economic Potential for War--Geography."

I take great pleasure in introducing Dr. Rollin S. Atwood.

DR. ATWOOD: When I was first asked to give this lecture, I accepted readily because I was anxious to make this attempt to discuss geographical factors and to think with you along the lines suggested in that topic. However, since that time I have found it almost impossible to think about anything else, and the job has become harder and harder. The events of the last three days have made the type of interpretation we are talking about today increasingly significant--so much so that I remarked to General McKinley as we came in that I was sort of trembling in my boots. The significance of attempting to interpret geographic factors in terms of the present day situation is something that we will have to approach--at least I will have to approach in a very meek manner.

I am assuming, however, that this lecture is to help us to appreciate the changing significance of geographical factors in an evaluation or a reassessment of economic war potential.

Location, position, size, surface features, climate, and resources are some of the conditions existing on the globe which are often thought of as geographic factors. Factors, however, to become geographic must be viewed and analyzed in terms of their significance in the adjustments that man has made or that he is making in certain specified regions of the world.

The geographer who is really studying the present day situation or present day civilization regards its history as a succession of geographic factors embodied in events. You might say that what is today a "factor" in geography becomes tomorrow a "fact" in history, and the two sciences cannot be held apart without materially decreasing the value of both.

I want to try to bring out a few of the things that will help us understand what geographical factors are, and how the geographer attempts to analyze such factors in terms of peoples, or nations, or regions.

The geographic approach has a definite and significant contribution to make in the evaluation of productive capacity, of economic resources, or of economic war potential, if you will. It is not, however, by making empirical descriptions of location, surface features, climate, soil, vegetation, and transportation. That is not geography.

Our President in his speech on Wednesday--which is already historic--said, "It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the Middle East."

"It is necessary only to glance at a map!" What did you see when you looked at that map? What did the people of the United States see? What did the people of Ecuador see? What did the people of India see? What did the people of Russia see? Because they all glanced at the map, and they are all glancing at it today.

What kind of a map was it to begin with? How many people had a mental image of a globe when they looked at that map? Did that map include the whole world? Or was it just the Mediterranean Basin? Or was it just Greece? Was it a flat map with no relief shown? Did the map include mountains? If it did, did it show the different types of mountains? Because some mountains are very different from others so far as significance to man is concerned. Did that map show deserts, lowlands, trade routes? Did it show economic resources? Did it show population? Did it show skilled labor? Did it show technical know-how? Did it show capital investments? Did it show the preconceptions of the past which color the geographical perspective of the present? Did the map which you looked at show those things?

The influence of geographical conditions on human activities has depended not merely on the realities as we know them to be, or have

known them to have been, but in an even greater degree on what man imagined in regard to those geographical conditions. In other words, each century, each week, each day right now has its only geographical perspective.

To appreciate the changing significance of geographical factors, it is necessary, first, that geographical conditions be interpreted in terms of man and man's adjustments.

The changing significance is what I want to stress, if I can, in these few minutes we have available this morning. What are the conditions that affect the changing significance of geographical factors?

First, I would list the type of economy that has been developed by the people, or the type of adjustment that people have made. This may be reflected in the stage of industrialization and the types of resources required.

If you are considering a small mining operation, the richness of the deposit is of tremendous importance, but, if you are thinking of a large-scale mining operation, with large amounts of capital involved, the richness of the deposit may not be the significant factor. The significance of iron and copper as geographical factors will change in terms of the way in which man uses them. His skill and his increasing ability to use lower-grade deposits have made tremendous shifts in the utilization of resources.

When machines are used in agricultural developments, topography becomes increasingly significant. Climate becomes increasingly significant when some new type of seed is invented which permits wheat production in the colder and drier areas. Thus the significance of climate, as a geographic factor, changes as man learns to grow crops in a different manner or to grow different crops.

Another situation that affects the significance of geographical factors—one that has been high lighted in the last few days—the aims of government, or, in other words, the foreign policy of a nation. The policy of the Bolivian Government at certain times made it difficult, if not impossible, to develop Bolivian oil resources. The policy of certain governments in South America at the present time is either making it possible or making it impossible to develop certain types of resources. Therefore, the aim of government, or the foreign policy, must be studied in order to interpret the significance of what we usually call geographical factors.

The education of the people; the outlook of the people; the means of transportation and communication; the scope of the operations--

national, regional, or world--are all essential in determining the significance of geographical factors as they affect the utilization of material resources.

In other words, geographical factors are not mountain ranges, oceans, rivers, coal fields, climates, soils, forests, and so on. They are young, rugged mountains; or they are old worn down mountains, acting as barriers to travel and communication; or they are mountains providing essential minerals; or they are mountains cutting off rainfall, or keeping out the freezing winds of winter. They are oceans acting as barriers, developing isolationism and nationalism; or they are oceans acting as connecting links, developing trade, bringing about division of labor, interdependence, and world empires.

They are the coal fields which constitute the fundamental resources base of a great industrial nation like England; or they are coal fields that are causing that industrial resource base of England to become less significant. They are coal fields that are located on the banks of streams, where coal can be exported easily (the key to Britain's power in the great period of industrial development); or they are coal fields in the hinterlands of China that are yet to have their significance in Far Eastern affairs. So much for the changing significance.

Now, as to one or two specific cases. Location and position in regard to the world or in regard to a region. At a given period in history position may be advantageous to trade and commerce, and you interpret the geographic factors in terms of that position with regard to its advantages to trade and commerce. Changes in production brought about during the Industrial Revolution, such as improved means of transportation, will either strengthen or weaken that position. With a change in economic development, trade, or regional interdependence, the position is either weakened or strengthened.

Athens, for instance, midway between Italy, Asia Minor and Egypt, was in a very strategic position, economically, socially, and commercially, when the Eastern Mediterranean constituted the known world. When the "known world" included the entire Mediterranean and North-western Europe, Athens yielded its strategic advantage to Rome. Rome later yielded to London when the area included the North Atlantic Basin. At the present time, when the entire world is considered, perhaps the strategic focus is located in the United States.

The age of discovery in the fifteenth century relegated the Mediterranean to a secondary position when sailing vessels were used and ocean trade routes became significant factors. With the age of steam navigation, there was a marked shift in world trade routes, and

the Mediterranean came back into significance in a different way. It came back with the use of the Suez Canal as the "life line of empire."

Issues may change in detail, but the dominance of the Mediterranean position, of course, continues. The Middle East is again the center of interest and conjecture. Turkey, having lost her alliance with Yugoslavia and Rumania, is now linking up with Trans Jordan and is looking toward the Arab League to offset pressure from the North.

Next, let's consider position in regard to the industrialization of the world. At the present time industrialization possibilities outrank position on or near major trade routes. Analyses must be made in terms of industrialization, industrial possibilities, the degree of accessibility to reserves, such as iron, coal, waterpower, and oil.

I should like to present to you for your consideration an additional and perhaps slightly unorthodox criterion for judging strategic position. I refer to the analysis of position with regard to peoples or nations who want choice one or two as described in President Truman's speech. I consider it essential today to interpret position in terms of those two choices, or preferably in terms of the people who have made those choices. The first choice is "A way of life based on the will of the majority as distinguished by free institutions"; the second is "A way of life based on the will of the minority, forcibly imposed on the majority."

At the present moment, if you were to analyze the significance of this area that the whole world is thinking about, what is the significance of its position with regard to peoples of the world who have made choice one or want to make choice one, and its position in regard to the peoples who have made choice two or have been forced to make choice two? I will leave the thought with you because I can't go into detail at this time.

The assets of position: With modern transportation the assets of position become more important than national or regional resources. A policy of national self-sufficiency, of course, means economic strangulation because it fails to utilize the assets of position. England was at the gateway to Europe; Japan, at the gateway to Asia. Those so-called "gateway" positions outranked all other assets. Do they outrank at present? With free trade after 1850, the location or position, both in the case of England and in the case of Japan, were extremely valuable assets. Transportation and communication constitute the means by which adjustments to distance are made, and therefore each new means of transportation starts a new series of distance relations and the significance of position must be interpreted in terms of such changes.

Now, a word regarding size as a geographic factor. In large nations such as China, India, and Russia, the extreme difficulties in the attainment of unity are most significant. The many languages and dialects that are developed, the separate regional economies, are to a considerable degree based on poor means of transportation and communication.

As you look over the world, the United States is the only large area of the world that has attained unity, and the iron rails, so to speak, have literally bound this Nation together. Other means of transportation and communication have, of course, helped immensely.

In any analysis of the Roman Empire, the development of the system of Roman roads and its significance in holding the Roman Empire together must be carefully studied. A similar study could be made of the British Empire in terms of its transportation and communication facilities to bring out the significance of size. In other words, the importance or the significance of size must be analyzed in terms of communication and transportation facilities.

I should like to mention, very briefly, a few of the more significant geographic factors with regard to Spain. Spain, as you know, is a more or less square, block plateau, two to three thousand feet high, and extremely inaccessible. Entrance to the interior must be made through steep-walled canyons. The limited coastal plain areas are isolated from each other. A map showing the distribution of population shows this situation as does a map showing the distribution of lowlands areas.

You recognize isolated developments around the edges with very little in the central plateau section. This has resulted in a series of isolated groups all through Spanish history, rather than the development of a united Spain. Even the Moors couldn't unite Spain. This resulted in a diversity of speech, a diversity of political thought, and diversities of a social character which played an important part in Spanish history.

The bases of the recent contest in Spain between the Church and the State reach back to the time of the Christianization of Spain. It is very difficult today to accomplish democratic rule and to hold the country together so that all parts of the country will benefit from the free exchange of products between the different regions of Spain.

I will conclude with just one or two remarks from Sir Halford Mackinder. He wrote in 1919 on the historical significance of the position (location) of Greece and Turkey. As a matter of fact, some of you may have heard Mr. Berle refer to it last night in "Town

Meeting of the Air."

Mackinder stated:

"Possession of Greece by a great heartland power would probably carry with it control of the world island"--and then he mentions, "Macedonian history would be reenacted."

"The Middle East, Arabia, must be treated as of world importance, for their possession may facilitate or prevent world communication." And you might add, "All that goes with that."

Another of Mackinder's quotations, "Islands"--and he means by "islands" the people of the United States and the people of England-- "Islands of the world cannot be indifferent to the fate either of Copenhagen or of Constantinople." Then he goes on "Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Bosphorus, the Dardanelles, outlets from the Baltic must be internationalized." Of course, that is interpreted in terms of the world picture.

I think I have taken the time allotted. If there are questions, I shall do my best to answer them.

(2 October 1947--450)S/h