# AIR AGE GEOGRAPHY

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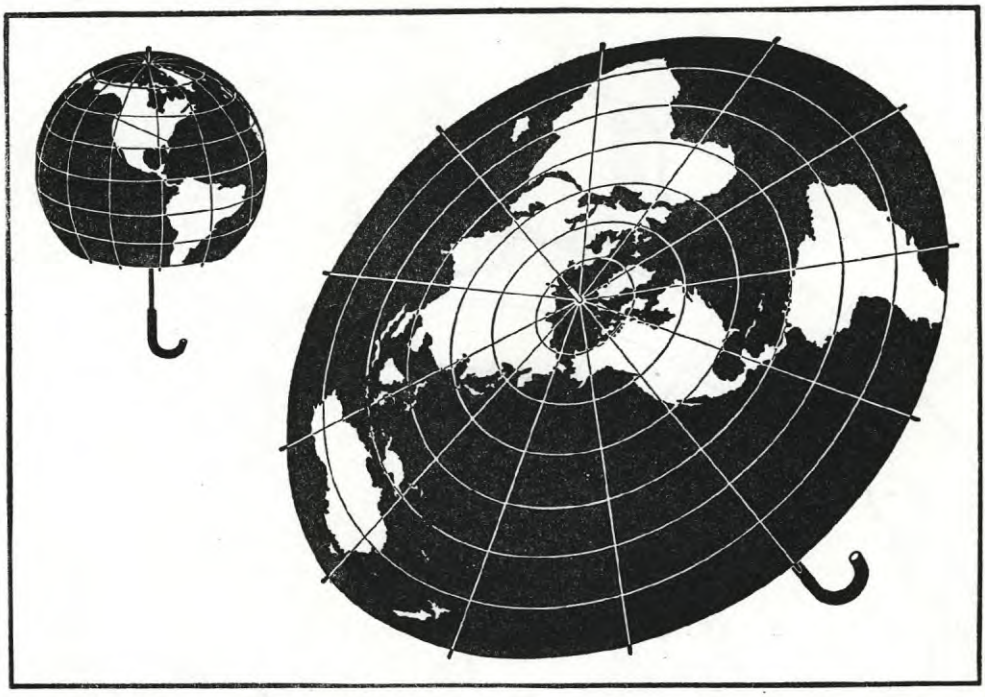
THE airplane has created a new geography of the world. Axis leaders knew this several years ago and have been taking advantage of it, but few Americans are yet really aware of it.

The portrait of this new geography is the World Map for the Air Age. It is a strange new map but it is the one we are going to do our thinking from in the years to come.

The reason for making this map is that although everyone knows that the earth is a globe we don't usually do our thinking from globes because they won't go into books and they can't be folded up and put into our pockets. To make the map we might imagine the earth to be a globe-shaped umbrella covered with an elastic fabric; then we put up the umbrella. If it were the flat Japanese variety, its top would then show a map like the one on the opposite page. Inside the equator of this parasol map the land and water outlines look very much like those on the globe itself. Outside that circle the lands and seas are badly stretched sidewise; but since most of the outer part of the map represents water, the stretching there is not serious.

At the center is the North Pole. About it lies the Arctic Ocean. Grouped about this little ocean are the great land masses of Europe, Asia, and North America. Away from these stretch Africa, Australasia, and South America like the arms of an irregular three-pointed star. The North Pole is the hub of a giant wheel, the meridians radiate outward like spokes, and the parallels are concentric circles becoming larger and larger away from the center. On the outer edge the South Pole is stretched from a point into a large circle, in order to provide the rim for the map.

Now what ideas can we get from such a map? The first thing which strikes us is that there is no Eastern or Western Hemisphere; the world is in one piece. Our Hemisphere Defense program and our Hemispheric Solidarity policy look rather short-sighted if in the Air Age there will be no hemispheres. Where did we get that hemisphere idea anyway? We got it in the days of ship geography, and we have gone on thinking ship-thoughts as we began to enter the age of aeronautics. Before the airplane the fact that the world's continents were grouped about the North Pole was of no importance, because ships could not sail across the polar regions. They could sail only east and west around the earth. Hence, in the age of ships, we made world maps by wrapping a cylinder of paper round the earth parallel to the equator, projecting the outlines of the continents and seas onto the cylinder, and then unrolling it. This spreads the earth out in an east-west direction with the polar areas forming the north and south edges of the world. These edges were so stretched that the continents were pulled



apart, giving the false impression that there really are two separate hemispheres.

Although no such separation really exists, the idea worked all right when world geography was dictated by steamships and naval vessels, but when the airplane came on the scene such a map of the world became actually misleading.

When our Pan American Good Neighbor Policy is examined against this map as a background it appears to have been based upon reasons which will be outdated when long-range flying becomes practical. Washington, D. C., is closer to every capital of Europe than it is to Buenos Aires; closer to Berlin than it is to Rio de Janeiro. Chicago is nearer to Russia than to several Latin-American republics. Boston is nearer to Moscow than to half a dozen Latin-American capitals. On the basis of nearness (which is what neighbor means), why not a good neighbor policy for Russia? We should of course be good friends with Latin America, but not for the commonly accepted false reason of nearness.

The average Middle Westerner feels that he is farther from the war than his brothers on the east or west coast. Is he? [illegible] long-range can be built. If three bombers were to take off from Nazi-held North Cape in Norway they would arrive over Washington, D. C., Des Moines, Iowa, and Seattle, Washington, at about the same moment. The shipyard at Bremerton on Puget Sound is about the same distance from Moscow as is the training station at Wilmington, North Carolina.

The airport in Japan nearest to us is on Shumshir Island. Two bombers setting out from Shumshir at the same time would reach the naval base in San Diego, California, and the wheat elevators in North Dakota or Manitoba at approximately the same instant.

Before this war we heard a lot of oratory in the Congress about defending "our hemisphere." We built a huge fortress at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and began building defenses on Bermuda, Trinidad, Antigua, and other islands. Then we began the construction of a two-ocean navy and considered that we had taken care of the matter. A glance at the new map however shows that Kodiak, Afognak, the Alaskan Peninsula, and the Aleutian Islands lie between us and Japan. Hawaii lies two thousand miles out of the way, off to one side. (Indeed, if one of those

FORT LAMY
AFRICA
SUEZ
BAGDAD
DAKAR
KARACHI
MARSEILLES
GIBRALTAR
EUROPE
NATAL
BERLIN
LONDON
RIO DE JANEIRO
MOSCOW
BANKOK
SINGAPORE
NORTH CAPE
ASIA
CHUNGKING
IRKUTSK
GREENLAND
NEWFOUNDLAND
NOVA SCOTIA
ANTIGUA
TRINIDAD
TO BUENOS AIRES AND FALKLAND ISLANDS
NORTH POLE
BERMUDA
VLADIVOSTOK
RUSSKOE USTE
NAGASAKI
BOSTON
NEW YORK
SOUTH AMERICA
WASHINGTON
DARWIN
TOKIO
MIAMI
MANITOBA
SHUMSHIR IS.
ALASKA
CHICAGO
DES MOINES
PANAMA CANAL
NORTH DAKOTA
KODIAK
NORTH AMERICA
GALVESTON
ALEUTIAN IS.
DENVER
SEATTLE
EQUATOR
TROPIC OF CANCER
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
SAN FRANCISCO
SAN DIEGO
TO PEARL HARBOR

long-range airplanes followed a direct route from Tokio to the Panama Canal it would cross southern Alaska and pass near Seattle, Denver, and Galveston!) On the Atlantic side it is Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and Scotland which lie between us and the Germans—not Bermuda, Trinidad, or Antigua. Despite these facts we were a long time seizing control of Greenland and putting troops in Iceland and the British Isles. Moreover, many Americans raised a hullabaloo when we did put troops in Iceland—they felt it was off to one side. On the Pacific side we built an enormous fortress at Pearl Harbor, but put only a few guns at Dutch Harbor, and none at all on Kiska, Attu, and Kodiak. These unfortified spots are the places however which lie between us and Japan—and the Japanese knew it, even if we didn't.

Our slowness in learning the new geography opened the way to the Axis powers. If you will examine an ordinary Mercator map of the world, you will see that a ship cannot go from one ocean to another without passing one of twelve points—Gibraltar, Suez, Falkland Islands, Singapore, Panama, and so forth. The British Empire controlled and fortified all of these except our own Panama. From these points the British Navy enforced peace for the whole world. We Americans were so ignorant of that world that even many of our leaders thought our peace and security were created by the width of our two oceans.

The Germans and Japanese however looked at the new map and saw that if they had sufficient air power, they could march and fly around the edges of the oceans and take these naval fortresses from the rear. Their whole strategy in this war has been a plan to do just that. It is a perfectly workable plan too. If it fails it will not be because the plan is not sound; it will be because the Axis has not enough air power. If America and Britain had had sufficient might in the air neither Japan nor Germany would have dared to start such a war.

At first Britain and the United States tried to meet aerial war with naval strategy alone and it didn't work. Now our program includes outbuilding the Axis air strength, and we are beginning to be successful. We are not yet as successful as we might be however because we are still fighting the war from the psychology of the old map instead of the new.

The new Air Age map (like the map on the opposite page) will be the diagram of our postwar world—assuming the inevitable development of long-range aviation. If you will look at the old map you will see that some countries have huge seaports. Other countries lie inland without good access to the ocean trade routes. There is no shoreline in the air. Any town can become an aerial seaport. Chicago is closer to most parts of Asia than is New York or San Francisco. There is no reason why its customs house may not some day do a bigger business than that of New York.

In air control some fifteen points are beginning to emerge as strategic spots: Greenland, Newfoundland, Alaska, Natal (at the "bulge" of Brazil), Dakar (at the elbow of West Africa), Miami (Florida), Bankok (Siam), Bagdad (Iraq), Marseilles (France), Nagasaki (Japan), North Cape (Norway), Russkoe Uste (Siberian Russia), Karachi (India), Fort Lamy (on Lake Chad in Africa), and Darwin (Australia). A few other points may eventually prove to be strategic.

One thing is certain. If you want to figure out the commercial and political world pattern of the future you had better use the new Air Age map. We are not going back to the old one.