

## Big Nations Developing Own Blocs of Influence Observer Sees Trend Toward "Centering" of Power

By Owen L. Scott.

A strong trend toward development of a few big world blocs, centering around big powers, is more and more apparent. This trend is showing both in the political and the economic fields.

Russia is busy extending her sway in Eastern Europe and later can be expected to show somewhat the same inclination in the Far East. Great Britain is seeking to cement more firmly the ties with her empire and is striving to obtain closer arrangements with the smaller nations of Western Europe. The United States is encouraging closer political and economic ties among nations in this hemisphere and intends, after the war, to keep a firm hold, directly or indirectly, on strategic positions in the Pacific.

The trends now apparent are encouraged by the plan for a postwar world organization agreed upon by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Marshal Stalin. This plan gives the five big powers of the world—United States, Britain, Russia, France and China—the power to veto any action taken by a big power against a little power or by one little power against another little power.

An almost inevitable result of an arrangement of that kind is to promote spheres of influence and blocs of nations.

For one thing, since all real power to decide what is right or wrong is in the hands of a big power, the little nations must feel it necessary to cuddle up to one of the other of the big powers. Otherwise, at some time in the future the big power might become irritated by something a little neighbor did and might crack down. The big power then could veto any action by the proposed world organization.

Or, in the second place a small nation with designs on a neighbor could assure itself of support of its big power friend and then act, assured that the big friend would block any action by the world peace machinery. Each little nation will have reason to become a satellite of a big nation.

Then, too, in a third situation the big power veto assures that any action by a world organization is likely to be very slow and often might be held up by a power located in some remote area. This means that even the big powers, such as Russia, France and Britain, are forced to seek alliances outside the league in order to assure prompt action in event of trouble. Such a set of alliances even now is taking shape aimed at independent action against Germany if she should get strong again.

Thus, block arrangements and spheres of influence are to be promoted, in all probability, by the new United Nations organization. This is all too clear now in the sphere being created by Russia.

The same trend is even more obvious in the economic field.

President Roosevelt hopes to float the world to prosperity after the war on a stream of dollars. He apparently expects that a promise of dollars will induce Britain, Russia and France, for example, to forsake nationalistic ventures based upon their own economic spheres.

Britain, however, is insistent upon a postwar system of empire preference in trade. She also is insistent upon retaining the basis for a system of currencies tied to the British pound. Great Britain, despite lease-lend, is to owe about \$12,000,000,000 abroad after this war and she feels that she must be free to maintain exchange controls and other controls while trying to work out of her debtor position. Likewise, she wishes to gain all of the advantages that go with a debtor position when dealing with creditors who have surpluses to sell.

Russia, of course, has a closed system of trade and will have after the war. The state does all of the buying and selling and there is no basis for free exchange of the kind that the United States professes to seek. Russia obviously intends to tie the economies of the nations in her sphere as closely as possible to the Russian economy.

France intends to control her foreign trade. Latin American nations, in spite of surface expressions of sympathy with free trade, are planning to keep their controls over exchange and their regulations of imports. The United States is talking free trade for postwar but this country is to have difficulty finding enough goods and services to import to cover the cost of goods and services exported. Loans are planned on a big scale to cover up that problem for 20 or 30 years, if possible. One of the reasons that other nations are planning to build their own trade blocs is fear of competition from the United States with its vast power to produce.

It is notable that there is far less interest in Great Britain. France and Russia in plans for world political and economic machinery than there is in the United States. The British are deeply interested in the fact that the United States now is committed to political intervention in Europe, but their publications show relatively mild interest in the proposed new United Nations political league and in the various international plans for stabilizing currencies, creating a world bank, regulating aviation development and for other things. There is more interest in working out regional or empire arrangements.

All of this suggests that in spite of talk of plans for world co-operation, the real trend is toward blocs and spheres of influence, both political and economic. The formula designed for centering all power in the hands of a few big nations who are to run the new United Nations political organization encourages that trend.