Summer 1941

Will Russia Win the War?

Alvin Leonard Lugn

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/geosciencefacpub

Part of the Earth Sciences Commons

https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/geosciencefacpub/363

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Papers in the Earth and Atmospheric Sciences by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
Will Russia Win the War?

ALVIN L. LUGN

As this is written, Russia is not in the war; nevertheless, she may eventually win the war. It may not be immediately, it may not be for a generation, it may not be for fifty or more years, and it may be very soon. The "War" may not even be the present holocaust which engulfs Europe; but eventually Russia may win, even though new battles may be won and lost and perhaps much more blood spilled in the meantime; even a German victory may intervene with far-flung domination in all of the continents.

Russia possesses unmeasured elements of strength and vitality. The realm of the Russian Bear encompasses a relatively sparsely settled domain of vast extent, and contains known but unestimated natural resources of every kind: fuel in the forms of coal and oil; iron, copper, manganese, and other common minerals; unknown but large deposits of probably every kind of strategic mineral; and agricultural potentialities unequalled anywhere, perhaps not even in North America. Perhaps the Ukraine alone contains more natural wealth than all the rest of Europe. And Russia contains two hundred millions or more of the world's population, counting the more recent acquisitions. Furthermore, great internal expansion and materialistic development are taking place and will, without undue crowding, continue for a long time within this vast region.

Only lately Siberia has been shown to be habitable for large populations. Its resources are enormous, and great cities and centers of industrial life will spring up at many places, even within the Arctic Circle. The Russians have convincingly demonstrated that the airways will supersede the frozen seaways of the Arctic regions for commerce and travel. They have proved that northern European Russia and Siberia are by air relatively near neighbors to North America by way of Stefanson's Friendly Arctic; that air bases are entirely feasible and practical in the regions of eternal frost in Siberia, in Greenland, and in the frozen wastes of the northernmost territories of Canada; that flying is much less hazardous throughout the frozen Arctic than in much lower latitudes. All this should be food for serious thought.

In addition to and of even greater importance than all the vast material elements of Russian strength is the vitality of its population. In an important sense, Russia is a young people's country. Herein lies Russia's strength. The proportion of Russia's population in the young and middle-age groups is large. The birth rate is relatively high, and the population is increasing, especially in the younger-age groups, the
WILL RUSSIA WIN THE WAR?

groups that always do the work and bring accomplishment to fruition.

This fact is of importance not only because armies can be recruited from the young men, important as that fact most certainly is, but because material progress in general and economic and social development are much more possible in young populations than where society is dominated by old people. The young shall inherit the earth; they always have and will continue to do so. Furthermore, it is the nation with “population strength,” not only “man power,” that comes out ahead. I speak of Russian strength in a purely physical and biological sense with no implications of any kind regarding the present political system in that country, a system which may be suited to the Russian temperament but which I do not think desirable for the Anglo-American.

II

Certain fundamental elements of weakness in the so-called western nations are becoming increasingly evident. These weaknesses are biological and psychological. A predominance of old people—that is, a steadily increasing proportion of populations in the age groups beyond middle age—is having important effects on the vitality and future outlook of many of the western nations. Of course, people in general live longer now than in former generations, largely because of improved medical knowledge and practice; but even in those nations where this factor is important and where there are more elderly people because of more healthful living conditions and better medical attention, there has also been a serious decrease in the birth rate and a falling off in numbers of the young and middle-age groups. It is true, moreover, that in certain countries, where living conditions and medical facilities are less favorable than in America and certain western European lands, the death rate among old people still is relatively high; but this is only a contributing factor to the predominance of the young-age groups in such places as Russia.

The increase in the proportion of old people in the populations of the Scandinavian countries, particularly Sweden and Norway, has been a matter of serious concern for many years. The large number of aged and infirm has greatly increased the expense and burden of care on the younger groups of the population. And this increased burden has operated also to decrease the birth rate, for the purely economic reason that in families where old people had to be supported, babies were a luxury and the number had to be greatly curtailed. For the same reason, many young people have had to postpone marriage and in general, then, have had fewer children. Conditions similar to these in France and England are too well known to require repetition here; but in France, England, and in some other countries the First World War took serious toll of the vigorous young men of that generation, and they have not been replaced.
PRAIRIE Schooner

Germany and Italy might have been in the same condition as France and England, except for rather heroic measures taken during the First World War itself and in the intervening years to encourage the birth of babies and thus fill the gaps and replace the war losses. So serious were these losses considered, that in Germany every potential mother was encouraged and subsidized to become an actual mother; illegitimacy was no longer regarded as dishonorable. We see in part the results of this teaching today, but the heroic measures taken in Germany and Italy to encourage the breeding of potential soldiers cannot be regarded as more than a temporary expediency, a "shot in the arm" as it were, unless such a policy was based on a sound doctrine of racial improvement planned to extend far into the future. For all we know, of course, this may have been the case.

The important point is that most of the European nations have experienced, or in the near future very likely will experience, serious shortages in the young and middle-age population groups. This trend is now being seriously accelerated by the war losses.

III

Even in America there is a strong trend in the same direction. There is a widespread decrease in school populations, an indication that many of the "right people" are unwilling or too busy to have families. A tendency in modern civilization, especially in Scandinavia and some other places, including America, is to make human beings less and less biological until certain large classes of the population come to view our natural physiological functions and reactions with embarrassment. Large or even moderate-sized families become unpopular, child-bearing becomes undignified and vulgar, the "best people" must live on an economic level above their means, and social activity above all must be served.

This kind of civilization if too long continued will quite certainly "civilize" a nation, a race, or humanity itself out of existence. This comes about through raising standards of living, so-called social refinement, intellectual éclat, economic pressure, and all of those things which contribute to the slowing down of the birth rate to an eventual decrease in population. Life, in this kind of society, becomes so full and interesting that people, especially women, are too busy and too preoccupied with interesting social activities and business opportunities to have time for, or interest in, those biological functions of mankind which are so essential to racial and national existence. When this time comes in the history of a nation, it is the beginning of the end.

In societies and nations dominated by old people, the outlook as regards both business and government generally is conservative, cautious, and to a large degree trusting. Norway well illustrates the point. War
and invasion were so far outside their orbit of thinking that the Norwegians scoffed at such possibilities. They trusted the written word and spoken pledges of their neighbors, without keeping their powder dry, and like conservative, well-settled old people they felt secure. Perhaps a people can become too civilized to fight, even for defense of home and land. There is an element of irony in the fact that one of the best military rifles of a generation or two ago was invented by two Norwegians, Krag and Jorgensen.

Another serious but not insurmountable weakness in western civilization or democracy is the opportunity which our society allows for the practice of graft for extended periods without curb.

The slow processes of democracy may permit the undue usurpation of power, sometimes on a small scale, sometimes on a large scale. We see in our own country the existence of so-called pressure groups dominated by a few individuals or perhaps by a single person. Hitler headed a pressure group, small at first, but which in time controlled all of Germany; and he has now been able to regiment and organize into one single, efficient machine a great nation, at first of eighty million people and later of one hundred ten million people (Greater Germany, exclusive of occupied lands). Hitler's victories over the democracies in the present war began first when his armed forces occupied the Rhineland; next he won a “battle” in Austria (March 12, 1938), in the Sudetenland (October 1, 1938), in most of Czechoslovakia (March 14, 1939), in Memelland (March 22, 1939)—all before September 3, 1939, not to mention “Munich.” The western nations permitted this, and many people were sympathetically inclined toward Germany for pushing her frontiers back to natural, defensible borders.

The attack on Poland also came within seven years of the rise of Hitler. It seems not improbable that the democracies might even have permitted this latest and fourth partition of Poland if Hitler had been willing to stop at that; but the world was unknowingly confronted with the most far-reaching, the most ambitious, the most insane, and apparently, to date, the most successful plan of world conquest in all history.

Hitler was, and is, possible because the German people were not prepared for, or schooled in, democratic principles and processes. They were unable to shake off suddenly the habits of regimentation to which they were long accustomed and take on the habiliments of a free and democratic people. Graft and license ran riot through the land, and they looked for and found a strong hand to put their house in order. Hitler was, and probably is, in a degree a maniac, but he did bring order to Germany; and Hitler is by the will of the German people.

IV

Can democratic civilization survive at all in the present crisis? Even
a few months ago, the writer would have voiced the hope that somehow hostilities might cease and that some manner of federal union of Europe might come out of the conflict. Western nations, even including Germany, should have buried the hatchet among themselves and presented a united and formidable front to Russia during the Finnish fracas. When the immediate difficulties might have been peacefully and fairly adjusted, they then could have planned the future good of all Europe. Such planning should have included sound economic and social adjustments, in democratic fairness to all, and the restoration of vigorous and healthy populations by means of long-time planning for the restoration of the young and middle-age groups in normal proportions.

V

But now, what if Germany wins? This is still a possibility. There will then most certainly result some kind of trade and military federation dominated by Germany, and democracy will go into eclipse. I do not mean domination by Hitler only, but by Germany as a whole. That the influence and force of such a power will be felt in every continent, there can be no longer any doubt. The world will be Germany's market place and playground, and its other populations will become the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for Germany.

Will Russia sit idly by and watch Germany reap all the spoils of victory? It is doubtful. After all, Russia, too, is a great market and a great storehouse of natural resources and other raw materials. The Ukraine, coveted by Germany, is close at hand. Does this mean that Russia might help the democracies? Not more than might be incidental to her own great plan of world conquest. If helping the democratic countries to trim the great Teutonic Samson's hair a little will aid the ultimate plan of Russia, well and good, but just so far. Such aid and comfort as she may give to either Germany or the democracies would serve only to maintain between them a balance which might prolong the conflict to ultimate exhaustion.

Russia, the great opportunist among nations, prefers to wait and, unless forced into conflict by some aggressor, let her potential enemies exhaust their strength against each other. Russia grows strong while others become weak. In this way a more or less untried and untested Russian war machine may more easily triumph ultimately against a veteran but exhausted foe.

Russia's occupation of certain Baltic lands and portions of Rumania is strongly suggestive of growing uneasiness in Russia over Germany's sweeping successes, not to mention the threat to Turkey and the Black Sea through the Balkans. It is quite possible, if not highly probable, that ultimately trouble from this direction may interrupt Herr Adolf's lion hunt. If Russia and Germany really do come to blows, it seems
more than likely that horrors of war, as yet unused and undreamed of—probably in the form of merciless, universally devastating chemical warfare—may be loosed. The relatively near future may see warfare enacted so horrible, so cruel, so completely “total” as to surpass any Dr. Fu Manchu nightmare.

VI

What if the Allies, or perhaps we should say even now Britain, should win before it is too late? There is little doubt that this would result in some kind of European federation dominated by England. A stalemate would be set up for Russia, which might irk the great Bear, but what he would or could do about it is an open question. If England wins, a more nearly status quo condition of world affairs will result than if Germany wins.

In either case, the western nations must plan for fundamental and far-seeing corrections of the main elements of biological and psychological weaknesses in their society. There must be a restoration of the younger-age groups in the populations and an increase in birth rates to a norm capable of maintaining the healthful balance between the different age groups within the several populations. There must be a larger proportion of young people in the democratic nations if those nations are to endure in the future; provided, that is, they survive the present crisis.

Even the most beneficent democracies must realize that their way of life may need to be defended with arms and soldiers as long as much more than half the world’s peoples continue to believe in, and practice, methods of force. Furthermore, so far in the entire history of the world, no nation or race ever has remained prosperous and successful that did not have a growing population, and how to continue prosperous with a stationary or decreasing population is a problem that the human intellect has not yet solved.

What if both sides, Germany and England, lose? What if the struggle continues without definite victory? What if both sides exhaust themselves and starvation and pestilence stalk the land? What if utter misery holds the people in its grasp? Can there be any doubt that then, if not before, the great day of “World Revolution,” at least as far as Europe is concerned, will be at hand? And what remains but for Russia to move in and gather together the remnants of nations? Will Russia win the war? As things have been going, is it conceivable that anyone else can win it?