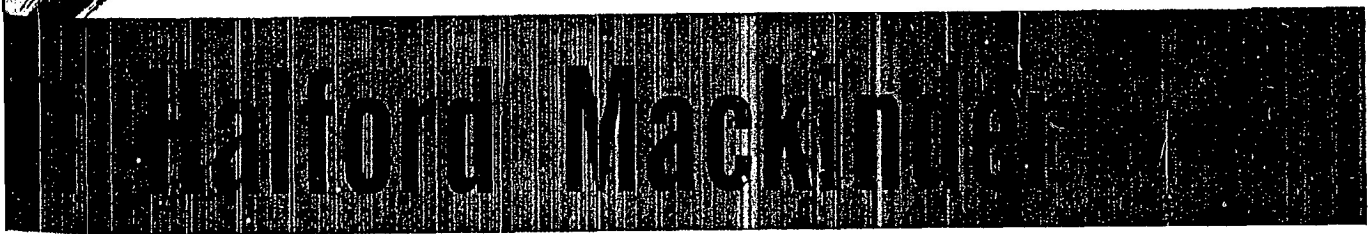


By Col Victor J. Croizat

• ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 1904, MR. HALFORD MACKINDER presented to the Royal Geographical Society one of the first papers by an Englishman in the field of geopolitics. This paper concluded that the "geographical pivot" of world power lay in the Eurasian landmass, generally in that area tenanted by Russia.

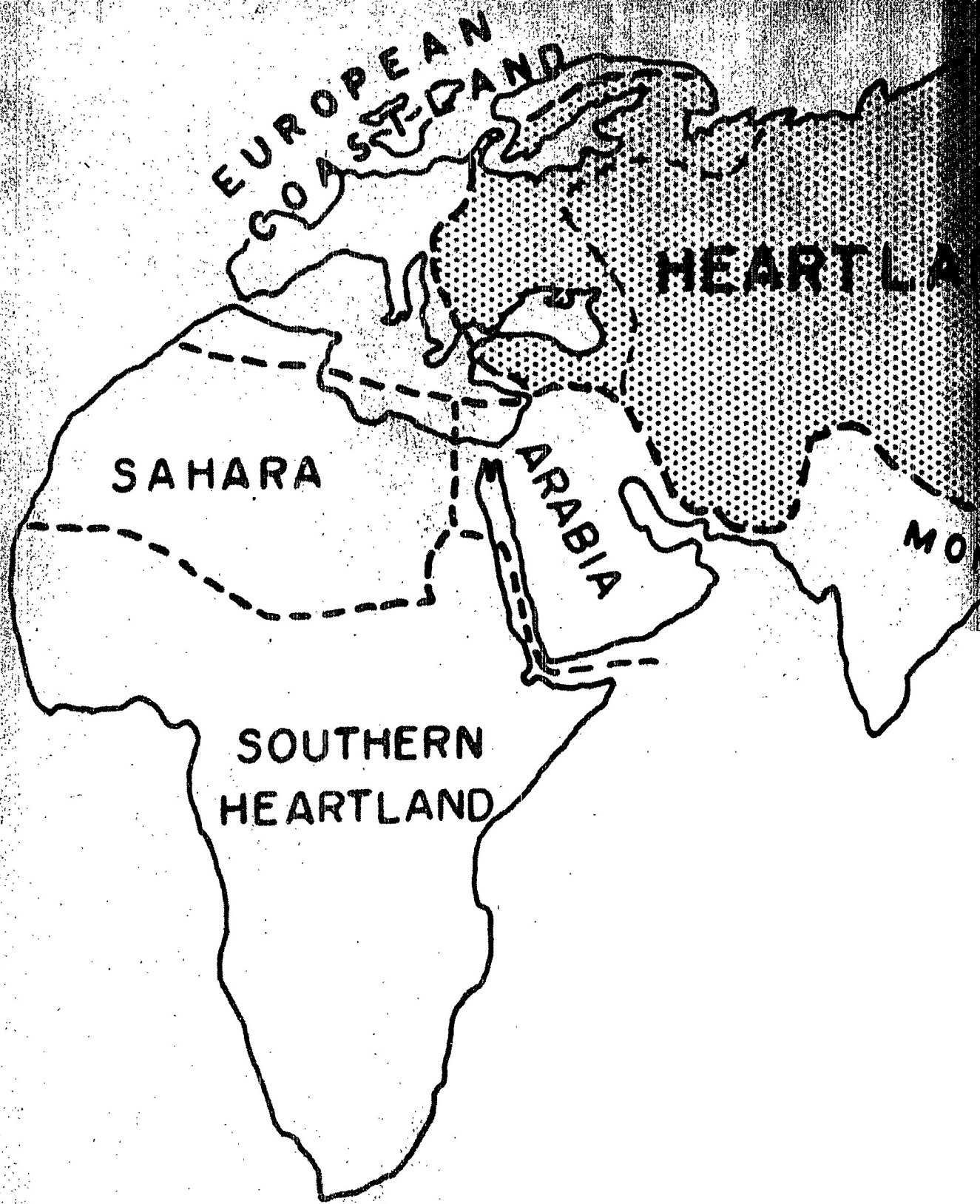
At the time that he presented this novel concept, Halford Mackinder was an instructor in geography at Oxford University and the Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His paper, based upon arguments deduced from careful appraisals of history and geography, was thus further supported by a creditable professional standing.

With the passage of time the words "geographical pivot" were to become the more familiar "heartland." The basic concept itself was to be adapted by the German Haushofer



**In light of present world tensions, this article concerning Mackinder's geopolitical concepts is particularly timely.**

Figures 1 & 2: Courtesy of Professor S. B. Cohen



**Fig. 1**

and others, to endorse Adolf Hitler's schemes for Germanic aggrandizement. Yet, after more than 50 years, Mackinder's world has endured.

In 1942, Maj George Fielding Eliot, the American military writer, referred to this world when he wrote: "I have read this . . . with astonish-

ment, admiration and regret." The first reactions he attributed to the discovery of the lasting realism of the ideas, and his "regret" lay in what he considered to be the limited appreciation of such notable work.

Sir Winston Churchill, writing of the nineteenth century, mentions

the shadow of Russia "creeping over India" and he adds that the land of the Czar was looked upon as "the cornerstone of despotism in the world." In the Crimean War of the mid-century, England and France joined Turkey in thwarting for a time the Russian designs on Danu-



bian lands and the Black Sea. Thus by 1861, the year in which Mackinder was born, Russia was already established in Europe as an ambitious power, and one whose objectives were contrary to British interests.

Halford Mackinder's youth, first in the Gainsborough Grammar

School and later at Epsom College, Oxford University, coincided with the years of expanding British wealth, prestige and strength. Like other Britons of his time he was aware that the glory of his empire was being supported and carried over the world by British sea power. Yet, the young man did not fail to observe the network of railroad lines spreading across Europe and the increasing significance of this cheap form of land transportation on the economy and military effectiveness of the affected states.

In 1890, the same year that the American naval officer, Alfred Thayer Mahan, published his brilliant treatise on the influence of sea power, Mackinder presented to the Scottish Geographical Society a paper which contained the germ of the ideas later to be developed into his memorable concept.

"Political geography," Mackinder told the assembled group, "seems to be founded on the fact that man travels and man settles." He added that while "travelling man seeks the lines of least resistance . . . settling man is mainly concerned with the productivity and security of tenure."

Mackinder recognized that the resistance of the physical features of the earth to travel or to settlement varied with the state of man's civilization. The sea had been a formidable barrier until the development of reliable ships. Now, he observed, the railroad was reducing the friction of land travel and was thus providing an ease of movement formerly enjoyed only on the seas.

In addressing himself to the map of the world, Mackinder noted that two thirds of the world's population was concentrated in only 2 areas: one he called the Gulf Stream Roman Area of Settlement, the other simply southeast Asia. He claimed that the productivity of these areas and the differences of their products provided the stimulus for East-West trade. In fact, he considered that history was nothing more than the story of this trade. His presentation concluded with the thought that: "The twin character of the world's civilization, Roman and Indo-Chinese is based upon 2 areas of settlement severed by the vacant desert. The narrow paths through the waste . . . are the homes of the oasis people, small in number . . . yet at once the

intermediaries and obstructives between East and West."

Admiral Mahan had clearly revealed in his writings an appreciation of the dependence of sea power upon a supporting land base. His studies in history led him to conclude that the size, population and productivity of the land base together with the related social and political factors were essential elements in the development of sea power. Mackinder agreed with Mahan in the intimacy of this relation between sea power and the land base, but when he looked to the future his views diverged.

Mackinder, citizen of the greatest naval power of his day, believed that cheap land transportation would inevitably balance the importance of sea power, and then land power would be capable of outflanking sea power.

Mahan, from a country which had for long turned its energies landward with consequent neglect of its maritime interests, argued that sea power would continue to be the dominant and decisive element of national greatness.

The record of history already contained much data to support Mackinder's ideas on the power relations of the future. As early as 1846, the Prussian VI Corps with all of its impedimenta had been moved a distance of 250 miles in 2 days. Without the railroad such an operation would have taken 2 weeks. The American Civil War, fought over a vast theater of operations, clearly demonstrated the vital importance of railroads in shifting decisive military power over great distances. In 1863, for example, a force of 23,000 men with their artillery and transport was moved 1,200 miles in 7 days: a creditable performance even today. Later, during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the concentration of the German Army by rail contributed in no small measure to the defeat of the French.

At the time that Mackinder was preparing his appreciation of the Russian power potential, history generously provided him with a graphic example of the new balance between sea power and land power. During the Boer War, Great Britain eventually had some 500,000 men in its South African field forces and these were supported — over 6,000





**Col Croizat** was commissioned in the Marine Corps after graduating from Syracuse University in 1940. He commanded "A" Co, 1st AmphTracBn, and "M" Co, 3rd Bn, 5th Marines at Guadalcanal. He commanded the 10th AmphTracBn at Roi Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. After attending the French War College in 1949 and 1950, he returned to Quantico where he instructed in the Tactics Section, Senior School. From 1954 to 1956, he served in Indochina.

in its, "secular struggle against Asiatic invasion." He did not discount the effect of Viking raids along the coastal areas, but to these incursions he did not attach the same significance as he did to the eastward movements of the horsemen across Asia.

Mackinder noted that a vast land containing some 21 million square miles extended from western Europe to Asia. This area had rivers that drained either to the frozen oceans of the north or to land locked seas in the south. Thus, for all purposes of external communication, this mass of Eurasia was cut off from access to the sea . . . it was an area well suited to nomads.

In the Middle Ages, Western Europe began to use the seas to emerge

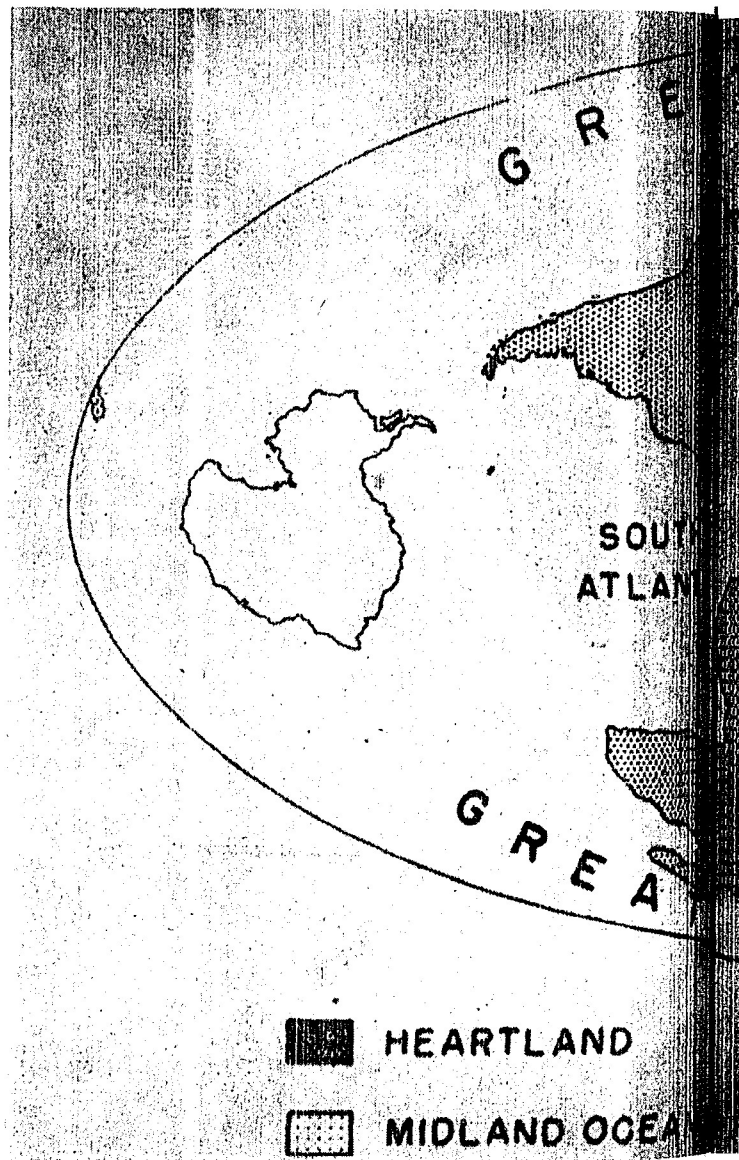
miles of ocean—by naval power. The existence of this naval power also served to deter interested European countries from becoming too curious about this struggle.

In the same period Russia demonstrated that it too could support military operations at distances of thousands of miles; not by sea, but by land. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out in February 1904, Russia had an army of 100,000 men in the Far East. With the beginning of hostilities she began to move reinforcements eastward at the rate of 30,000 per month over the single rail line of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. It has been estimated that Russia applied only about 10 per cent of her military potential in this war; had she done more the result might have been different. The modest Russian effort alone was enough to cause the Japanese to strain to their utmost their capabilities in order to attain eventual victory.

The beginning of the twentieth century coincided with the end of British imperial expansion. Exploration and conquest were largely done. Henceforth, instead of looking primarily across the broad sweep of the world's seas, Great Britain would look upon herself more and more as an integral part of continental Europe. Mackinder recognized this trend and when he addressed the Royal Geographical Society in 1904 he spoke of the beginning of this new era in these terms: "Every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos will be sharply reechoed from the far side of the globe. . . . Probably some half consciousness of this fact is at least diverting much of the attention of statesmen in all parts of the world from territorial expansion to struggles for relative efficiency."

After this acknowledgement of the then current state of affairs, Mackinder proceeded to unfold the geographic and historic background in front of which he intended to develop his theme of world power relations.

"Europe," he claimed, achieved its civilization, "under pressure of external barbarism" and more specifically



upon the world. Eventually it was to multiply thirty-fold the coasts and seas to which it had access. At the same time Russia was moving overland toward the south, consolidating her position as a great land power. Now the development of easy land travel was giving to a country isolated from the sea, the power formerly reserved only to maritime nations. Mackinder then asked: "Is not the pivot region of the world's politics that vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships, but in antiquity lay open to the horse riding nomads, and is today about to be covered with a network of railroads?" In reply to his question, he pointed out that Russia now replaced the Mongol Empire and had in its land "the conditions of a mobility of military and economic

power of a far reaching and yet limited character." Mackinder believed that if the pivot state were to gain access over the marginal lands of Eurasia it could use its resources to build the naval power which would ultimately give it the control of the world. In his final remarks he cautioned: "Were the Chinese . . . to overthrow the Russian Empire and conquer its territory . . . they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, an advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region." History has turned full circle. First when the seas marked the edges of the world there was the pattern of great powers such as the Chinese and the Roman deriving their strength from control of large land

masses. Then when man conquered his fears and moved out upon the seas he found that control of this medium facilitated his commerce and simplified the application of military power. Now land power had regained its former importance and was capable of challenging sea power on vastly improved terms. In the 15 years that followed the publication of Mackinder's "pivot area" concept the world passed through the cataclysm of a great war. Mackinder spent most of these years as a member of Parliament from the Camlachie Division, Glasgow. This vantage point, together with continuing interest in geographical and economic matters, enabled him to review and refine his original concept in the light of changing centers of power and the new transportation

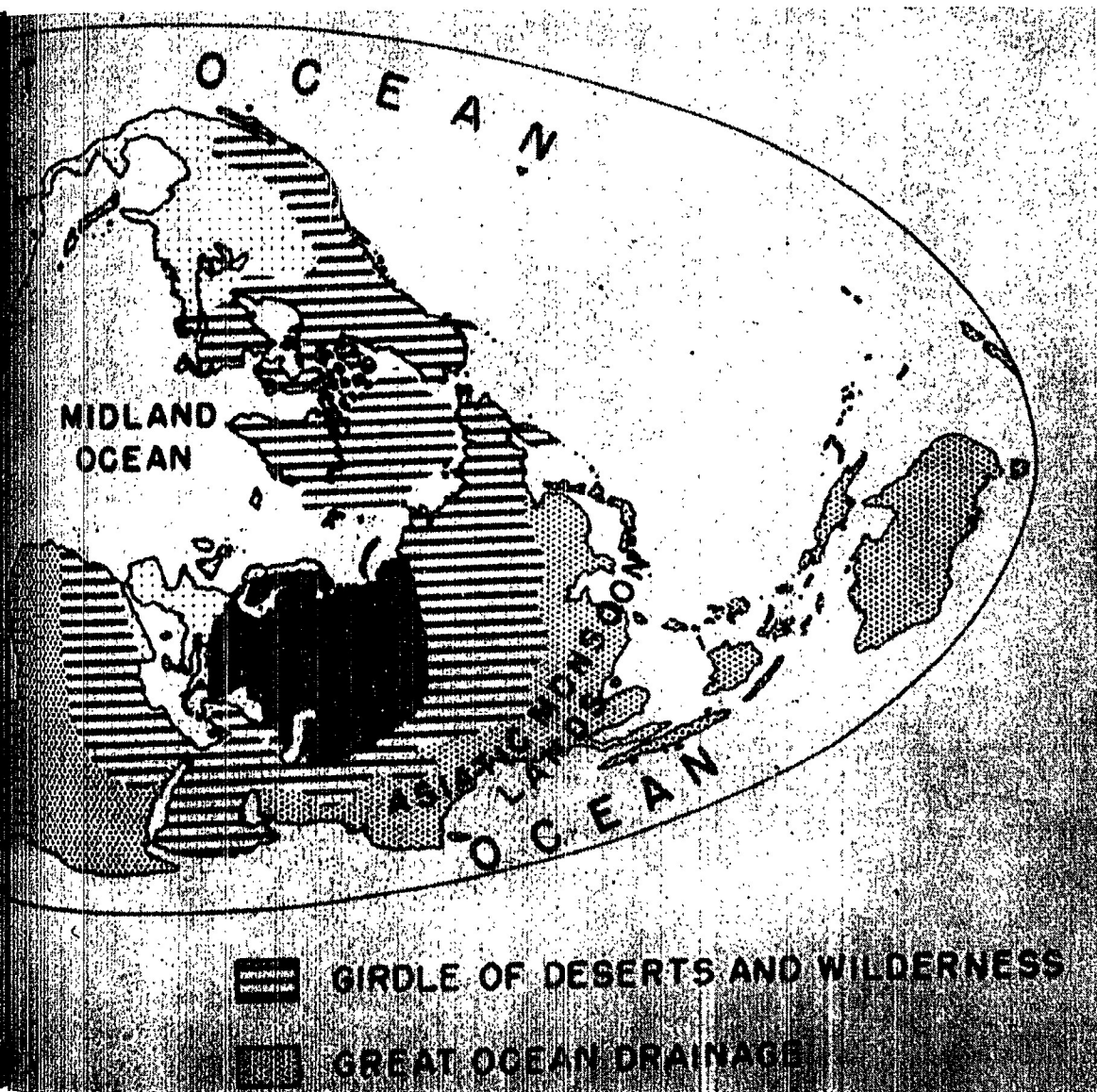


Fig. 2

devices: the truck and the aeroplane.

In 1919 he published *Democratic Ideals and Reality* in which he elaborated with considerable detail his earlier ideas and slightly modified his concept of the Heartland. This book contains the matured thoughts of Mackinder on the realities of power relations and he suggests how statesmen may use these realities in determining the future . . . the task which was then about to be undertaken. A measure of the merit of this book lies in the fact that a 1942 edition was published with no change and was endorsed by Edward M. Earle and Maj George Fielding Eliot, both well known writers on military subjects.

In the elaboration of his theme on world power relationships, Mackinder had some interesting views on aviation.

Speaking of an aviation still in the early stages of 1919, Mackinder stated that, "sea power will use the waterway of the Mediterranean and Red Sea only by the sufferance of land power, for air power is chiefly an arm of land power." Today of course the range of aircraft has been vastly extended both by the development of the aeroplane itself and by the utilization of the naval carrier. Nevertheless the essential accuracy of this remark, concerned with the control over communication on land or sea which air can exercise, remains.

Writing of North America, Mackinder claimed that the term "New World" implied a "wrong perspective" for this continent was "now shrinking to be an island." He added that there was a remarkable parallelism between the history of England and that of America. "Both countries have now passed through the same succession of Colonial, Continental and Insular Stages." Finally he told Americans that they "must no longer think of Europe apart from Asia and Africa."

In describing the extent of what he now termed the Heartland (Fig. 1) Mackinder restated his basic definition: that this area was inaccessible to navigation from the ocean and added that: "The opening of it by railways . . . and by aeroplane routes in the near future, constitutes a revolution in the relation of men to the larger geographical realities of the world."

In his original concept presented in 1904, Mackinder described the geographical pivot area as being exclusive of the Black and Baltic Seas. Now he claimed that land power could close both of these seas and therefore they rightfully belonged in the Heartland. Thus he concluded: "The Heartland is the region to which sea power can be refused access, though the western part of it lies without the region of Arctic and continental drainage."

In the further analysis of the Heartland, Mackinder stated that only in recent years had this area possessed the manpower to actually constitute a threat to the liberty of the world. In this context he referred to the Heartland as, "this citadel of the World Island." Here may be the clue revealing the reason for his change in the boundaries of the Heartland from those he used when he described the pivot area. In 1904 the pivot area was one of movement; a zone of fluid forces with no need for carefully prescribed limits. Now, in 1919, he spoke of the Heartland as a citadel. This implied an expanse with finite boundaries based upon identifiable terrain features; an area containing elements of power with a large population and resources.

After defining the geographical units of his world, which had been developed from a survey of early history, Mackinder proceeded to discuss the effect of recent events on the areas he had defined. Here he stated: ". . . we have come to the conclusion that the World Island and the Heartland are the final realities in regard to sea power and land power, and that East Europe is essentially part of the Heartland."

The essence of strategy he then summarized in the well known dictum:

"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;

Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island;

Who rules the World Island commands the World."

The first Great War, although best remembered for the violent and prolonged agonies on its Western Front, was in fact a struggle for Eastern Europe . . . a continuation of the historic struggle between the German and the Slav to determine

who would gain control of the Heartland. Mackinder believed that unless this conflict were resolved "our descendants will find themselves under the necessity of marshaling their power afresh for the siege of the Heartland."

Mackinder considered that the *casus belli* in Eastern Europe could be eliminated by the creation of a tier of states between Russia and Germany. This was an echo of the British buffer state policy of the previous century when the problem had been to keep Russia from absorbing segments of the disintegrating Turkish Empire. The world has since discovered that Hitler was not discouraged by the independent states created at Versailles. Today, after a second Great War the German question as part of the buffer state system is perhaps the most troublesome of the many problems confronting the Communist and Free Worlds.

The inclusion of the Black and Baltic Seas within the Heartland gave to the tenant power the capability of developing naval forces on these seas which could then be unleashed over the oceans of the world. To avoid this possibility Mackinder proposed that the exits to these seas, the Dardanelles and the Skaggerak, should be internationalized. This has not been done, but the inclusion of Denmark and Turkey within the alliance of North Atlantic States has placed these vital areas under control of the free west.

Just after the publication of his book, Mackinder departed for Russia to become the British High Commissioner for the Southern Area. Upon his return to England in 1920 he was knighted and later named Chairman of the Imperial Shipping Committee. In a few years he also became the Chairman of the Imperial Economic Committee.

In 1943, just 4 years before his death, Halford Mackinder was asked by the magazine *Foreign Affairs* to review and comment on the Heartland concept. In his reply Mackinder modified the boundaries of the Heartland (Fig. 2) and discarded his 1919 dictum in favor of accord- ing an increased importance to the coastal or Rimland area.

When he spoke of air power he confessed that it had become an important element of national greatness. He added that air power was

like sea power in that its effectiveness depended largely upon the quality of the supporting ground organization. Mackinder concluded his review with the thought that the Heartland as a "citadel of power," the idea he had advanced in 1919, remained valid in 1943.

The ideas that Mackinder developed, elaborated and expounded in his long and vigorous lifetime were of such significance that they invited criticism and comment from many sources.

Nicholas Spykman considered that the importance of the Heartland was suggested to Mackinder by his appreciation of the advantage of a central position with interior lines of communication.

Spykman cautioned that even with motor vehicle roads, the railroad and the aeroplane, the Heartland was ringed on 3 sides with some of the greatest transportation obstacles in the world. In his analysis of the Rimland, a word which he coined, Spykman called it a "vast buffer zone of conflict between land power and sea power" and added that the Rimland must defend itself from both the Heartland and the off-shore islands. He concluded that "its amphibious nature" lies at the basis of its security problems."

In continuing his remarks on Mackinder's concepts, Spykman pointed out that there never has been "a simple land power - sea power opposition." Spykman emphasized the importance of the Rimland . . . the "buffer zone" of "amphibious nature" and ended his analysis with the remark that: "If there is to be a slogan for the power politics of the Old World it must be: 'Who con-

trols the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world'."

It is apparent that Mackinder did not consider his ideas as static or rigid, since he changed them at several writings. If he were still alive today he would admit that recent developments had again influenced him and that fresh modifications to his writings were in order. In the final analysis the enduring quality of Mackinder's works lies in the fundamental significance of the ideas he advanced, rather than in the merit of the details with which he embellished his thoughts.

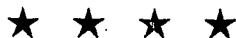
Soviet Russia represents today one of the most formidable powers that the world has ever seen. When Mackinder recognized Russia's politics of expansion he was not uncovering something new; Russian imperialism had been around for several hundred years. When he emphasized the tremendous power potential of Russia he was again only reaffirming what others had said. The thing that Mackinder did which was new, was to take the evidence of history and the facts of geography, sift and organize this mass of information, and end up with a simple concept which contained the reasons for Russian imperialism and the sources of Russian power.

Mackinder is also largely responsible for setting forth the bases for the policy of containment which has been guiding US international affairs for over 10 years. Mackinder made a very plausible case for the balance between sea power and land power. The way to keep Russia, as a great land power, from becoming mistress of the world, was to keep

her from gaining access to the oceans of the world; hence containment. It is because of the emphasis on this containment that Mackinder came to view in later years the coastal areas, or Rimland, as being of increasing importance. This was the Zone of Action; this was the area whose possession would determine the balance of power.

In one of his earliest writings Mackinder had accurately stated that the resistance of the earth's physical features to man's activities, varied with the state of his civilization. Now the modern aeroplane and the icebreaker have combined to gain for Russia an increased usefulness of her polar seas. The barrier effect of these seas is thus being lessened as man develops his technology. But, aside from this, Russia has already reached the world's oceans. She has bases on the Pacific and Fleets on the Baltic and Black Seas. These last can gain access to the open seas with only little military effort. Thus Russia has been able to add to its land power, important reinforcing elements of sea power. She is on the way toward attaining that combination of powers which Mackinder stated would make for domination of the world.

The US can gain little by attempting to oppose Russian land power with an equal land power. Yet, traditional Russian imperialism must be stopped. This can be done, first through a combination of sea power and airpower capable of denying to Russia the seas of the world, and second, through the maintenance of the capability to exploit what Spykman called "The amphibious nature" of the Rimland. US ♣ MC



### Team Shooter . . .

♣ FMFPAC's headquarters building at Camp H. M. Smith in Hawaii also houses CINCPAC's joint staff consisting of Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force personnel.

Recently while waiting to board an elevator in the basement of the building, I stood fast while an Army Major entered. I followed and pressed the button for the fourth floor. The Major and I talked amiably up to the third floor when the door opened and a Marine Corporal armed with an M-1 and wearing a shooting jacket walked in.

"Who are you going to shoot, Corporal?" the Major asked.

"Gonna beat the Army team at Hilo, Sir," was the NCO's reply.

"Are you a team shooter?" asked the Major.

"No, Sir," came the reply. "Just a Marine."

MSgt R. B. Richardson