

World co-operation

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WORLD CO-OPERATION.

by H. BÖSCHENSTEIN.

(Activities of the World Postal Union).

The widespread activities of the numerous Special Agencies which are attached to the United Nations, have become, to-day, one of the principal factors in the field of international co-operation. At the same time, it should be remembered that, in addition to this, there are a number of other supra-national institutions which are engaged in valuable practical work. One of these institutions, which was created several decades before the UNO came into being, is the World Postal Union. To-day, we would like to speak about its activities.

The World Postal Union publishes that excellent journal "Union postale", which appears in Berne, in German, French, English, Russian, Chinese and Arabic, and which by its external aspect alone, commands both astonishment and respect, as being a remarkably fine specimen of the printer's art. In its last issue, this publication suggests that steps be taken to bring about some uniformity in respect of the vast quantity of variations pertaining to the postal charges for air mail.

The author of the suggestion, A. Guillaume, proceeds from the correct point of view that the post-office in the receiving country cannot, very often, be sure whether or not the post-office in the despatching country, or rather the sender of the letter, has put on the right amount of postage. This is due to the fact that in the domain of postal charges for air mail there exists such a state of chaos, that even the post-office officials are at their wit's end. The situation is rendered still more difficult as a result of currency complications. In 1951, discussions took place in Cheltenham, between the World Postal Union and the International Organisation of Air Transport Companies regarding the possibility of achieving uniformity in respect of air mail postage. At that time, however, it proved impossible to attain the desired aim.

The author of the afore-mentioned proposal considers that it is necessary to introduce new regulations in this matter, by degrees. As a first step, he suggests that the terrestrial globe should be divided up into air mail postage zones. Of course, there are considerable difficulties to be faced in the matter of this division into big geographical zones, in accordance with the destination of the postal matter, more especially in regard to such countries which belong

to more than one Continent, as for example Europe and Asia. For these zones, at least, a uniform rate of postage could be made applicable. For instance, it might be practicable to divide the entire air mail traffic into ten zones. Then, each country, should it wish to do so, could also introduce some exceptions, as for example, preferential postage rates for adjoining countries. The ultimate aim would be, of course, to establish the same practical uniformity in regard to air mail postage, which has been achieved by the World Postal Union in respect of other postal rates. One recalls, somewhat pensively, those times in the 19th century, when this Union was founded, or when delicate questions of power policies were settled at the Berlin Congress of 1874, and when such an extremely polite, urbane tone prevailed among the mostly aristocratic delegation. . . Much more urbane and polite I fear than is the case nowadays.

The best propaganda for international co-operation is still the practical work which is carried out by experts in certain specified, clearly defined domains: by means of agreements concluded between railway administrations, through the work of the World Postal Union and that of technicians of every kind who are keen to see the tangible results of their labours and have no use for publicity stunts. The proposal which has been made for the gradual, but not sudden, introduction of uniform rates in regard to air mail postage, shows that the specialists prefer to bring about a development by easy stages, rather than to aim at a too distant target and run the risk of missing a bull's-eye, as is so often the case in regard to international policies and diplomacy, which are wrapped in the fogs of propaganda.

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