

Eurafrica as a Pan-European vehicle for Central European colonialism (1923-1939)

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Introduction

The Italian geographer Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota opened his 1934 book, which he gave the title *Eurafrica*, by writing that 'One finds these days a great deal of talk of Eurafrica.'¹ This statement is remarkable when we consider that Eurafrica had only begun to be used as a political term five years earlier, in an article by the founder and president of the Pan-European Union, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, in the February 1929 edition of the organisation's monthly journal, *Paneuropa*. Nor was D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota overstating the case: in those five short years, a number of influential books had been published on the topic, rendering what had so recently appeared an awkward neologism into a commonplace, found everywhere from the textbooks of geopolitics to speculative science-fiction.² From nowhere, 'Eurafrica' had become ubiquitous, and the ideology behind it had seeped into the popular consciousness: as Peo Hansen & Stefan Jonsson

¹ P. D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, *Eurafrica: L'Africa per l'Europa, l'Europa per l'Africa*, Rome, 1934, 3.; quoted in (and translated by) D.A. Atkinson, "Geopolitics and the Geographical Imagination in Fascist Italy" (PhD Thesis, Loughborough University of Technology, 1995), 196.

² H. Sörgel, *Mittelmeer-Senkung, Sahara-Bewässerung, Panropaprojekt*, Leipzig, 1929.; A. Sarraut, *Grandeur et servitude coloniales*, Paris, 1931.; J. Destrée, *Pour en finir avec la guerre, par une organisation fédérative de l'Europe, la constitution d'une police internationale et la reconnaissance pour les citoyens du droit de refuser le service militaire pour le crime de guerre d'agression*, Brussels, 1931.; H. Sörgel, *Atlantropa*, Munich, 1932.; G. Valois, *Note sur l'Afrique, chantier de l'Europe [Procès-verbal de la réunion du conseil économique de l'Institut d'économie européenne, le 17 novembre 1932.]* Brussels, 1932.; E.-L. Guernier, *L'Afrique, Champ d'Expansion de l'Europe*, Paris, 1933; J. Caillaux, "D'Agadir à la grande pénitance " (Paris: Flammarion, 1933); G. De Michelis, *World Reorganisation on Corporative Lines [La corporazione nel mondo]*, London, 1935 [1934].

argue, ‘the general idea of an internationalization and supranationalization of colonialism in Africa was one of the least controversial and most popular foreign policy ideas of the interwar period’.³

In this paper, I focus on the development of the idea of Eurafrica in the literature of the man and organisation that coined it: Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and the Pan-European Union. This organisation, launched in 1923 with the publication of Coudenhove-Kalergi’s programmatic book *Pan-Europe*,⁴ established national chapters in all European states in order to lobby for the creation of a Pan-European Union. As we shall see, this Union would include Europe’s African colonies, thus forming what was from 1929 described as ‘Eurafrica’. While neither the first nor the only organisation calling for a federal link between the states of Europe, the Pan-European Union was the most popular of these organisations in the interwar period. Moreover, Coudenhove-Kalergi’s vision was the most readily associated with the incorporation of African territory as an integral part of a continental-scale ‘European’ political project (see fig. 1, juxtaposing the visions of Coudenhove-Kalergi and the great French statesman and fellow agitator for a united Europe, Aristide Briand). By engaging with Europe’s colonial present, Coudenhove-Kalergi and the like-minded writers he published in the *Paneuropa* journal sketched out a distinctive colonial future within his vision of the new planetary geopolitics, a third path that fell somewhere between the imperialism embodied by the British Empire and the Mandate-based liberal internationalism of the League of Nations. While after WWII Eurafrica would become most intimately associated with the French efforts to reconcile its own colonial empire with participation in European political

³ P. Hansen and S. Jonsson, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism*, London & New York, 2014, 32.; see also J. Steffek and F. Antonini, Towards Eurafrica! Fascism, Corporativism and Italy’s Colonial Expansion, in: I. Hall (Ed), *Radicals and Reactionaries in Twentieth-Century International Thought*, ed. I. Hall, New York, 2015, Pages 145-169, 16.

⁴ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, New York, 1926 [1923]. Its original German-language title was *Paneuropa*; I use the English-language title of the book to distinguish it from the organisation’s journal, also titled *Paneuropa*.

integration,⁵ my case here is that this originary expression of Eurafrica is as much a Central European story as it is a French one.

For Pan-Europeans, Eurafrica was a multi-faceted entity, justified on multiple grounds. It promised to rationalise resources and trade in such a way that Europe would gain access to raw materials, and Africa would gain access to a market by which it might profit from these riches. It also enabled the rationalisation of population pressures, as the overpopulated European states could re-settle in the apparently underpopulated Africa, undertake infrastructural projects that would help develop lands previously thought be inhospitable, and oversee the education of the local population. These logics were presented in technical terms, and were justified statistically by recourse to land area and population. Large landmass was held to signify resource richness, low population density signified an inability to make the most of this land (and hence an invitation to colonisation), and high population density indicated a ‘pressure’ that needed releasing through emigration.

However, complementing these purportedly technical justifications was an equally strong moral-historical argument, which offered a share in the colonial experience to those European nations who had either had their colonies stripped at Versailles (i.e. Germany), or through ‘historical accident’ had never had colonies. Coudenhove-Kalergi argued that without a Eurafrican solution, European states would soon be caught between the external danger of expansionist superpowers in a closed world, and the internal danger of intra-European political tension between colony-owning and non-colony-owning states. With Pan-Europe, both these dangers would be averted, to the advantage of all European states:

‘To the European colonial Powers would be guaranteed the possession of their colonies, which, in isolation, they would sooner or later be bound to lose to World Powers.

On the other hand, those European peoples who, as the result of their geographical

⁵ See M. Liniger-Goumaz, *L'Eurafrrique: utopie ou réalité? Les métamorphoses d'une idée*, Yaoundé, 1972; M.-T. Bitsch and G. Bossuat, eds., *L'Europe Unie et l'Afrique* (Brussels / Paris / Baden Baden: Bruylant / L.G.D.J. / Nomos Verlag, 2005); Hansen and Jonsson, *Eurafrica*.

position and historical destiny, did not receive fair treatment at the time when the extra-European world was divided up—such as Germans, Poles, Czechs, Scandinavians, and Balkan peoples—would find, in the great African colonial empire, a field for the release of their economic energies.’⁶

This paper digs into this moral-historical justification for Eurafrica, examining the context in which it was made, and asking to what extent we ought to view the Eurafrican promise of Central European colonial access as a radical (albeit equally neo-colonial) alternative to the Mandate system of the League of Nations.

Eurafrica and the Pan-European Union

Although the Pan-European Union did not employ the specific term ‘Eurafrica’ until 1929, as an idea it was immediately obvious in the PEU’s most influential and widespread piece of propaganda: the Pan-European World Map (see fig. 2). This map was featured on a wide range of Pan-European literature and propaganda, perhaps most visibly as the rear cover of the majority of the issues of the monthly *Panuropa* journal from its very first issue in 1924 until 1938, its cartography essentially untouched. It arrestingly depicted Coudenhove-Kalergi’s description of a ‘Pan-Europe’ that straddled the Mediterranean, bounded to the east by a line running south from Petsamo (on the Finno-Russian border) to Katanga (the south-easternmost province of Belgian Congo) and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean (excluding the British Isles), thus forming ‘a clear-cut geographical unit...based on a common civilization, a common history and common traditions.’⁷ Coloured black and unsullied by internal state borders, this block stood proud of the various forms of hatching that marked the other four global power-blocs. It was, in short, the clearest possible visual statement of

⁶ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, 178-179.

⁷ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *An Idea Conquers The World*, London, 1953, 81.

the unity of Europe with its African colonies in a supra-national, Pan-European whole.

The specifics were made clear in the book that launched the movement, Coudenhove-Kalergi's 1923 *Panuropa*. When coming to terms with the extent of Pan-Europe, measured in terms of area and population, Coudenhove-Kalergi was clear that the colonies were to form an integral part of his vision of European unification:

‘the European territories of the Pan-European state-group form but a fraction of its power-complex. In order rightly to estimate the future possibilities of Pan-Europe, its colonies must also be taken into account.’⁸

He further distinguished between ‘Pan-Europe’s continuous empire in Africa’ and ‘Pan-Europe’s scattered colonies’, implicitly prioritising the former. Indeed, the weight placed on ‘continuous empire’ is made clear by suggestions for a rationalisation of territories, which included ‘Colonial readjustment in Africa by an exchange of England’s West African colonies for equally valuable East African colonies belonging to Europe’, and the selling off of Pan-Europe’s ‘scattered’ American colonies (i.e. French Guiana & Suriname).⁹ In short, from the very start of the Pan-European movement, Europe’s shared African colonies were simply integral. They gave Pan-Europe the territory to form a rough balance of power with competing continental blocs, the land and resources to be economically self-sufficient, and the means to resolve the internal grievances and demographic pressures of European states.

This vision of Europe united with its African empire was given the name ‘Eurafrica’ in Coudenhove-Kalergi’s lead article to the February 1929 edition of *Panuropa*, entitled “Africa” (see fig. 3), the journal’s first article to take the issue as its sole focus.¹⁰ (Edited versions of this article were also issued as a press release around the same time, in German, French and English.)¹¹

⁸ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, 32-33.

⁹ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Pan-Europe*, 48-49.

¹⁰ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Afrika, *Panuropa* 5 (1929) 1-19.

¹¹ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “Afrika”, *Panuropa Korrespondenz/Correspondance Paneuropéenne* (i.e. ‘Pan-European

Indulging in a series of geographical metaphors, and scale-jumping with abandon, Coudenhove-Kalergi began by comparing Europe to the United States:

‘Africa is our South America.

Africa is the tropical Europe. Gibraltar is our Panama. Politically, West Africa is the southern continuation of Europe beyond these straits.

Europe is a house with many apartments and many tenants – but Africa is its garden. Whereas the Soviet Union separates us from Asia, and the Atlantic Ocean separates us from America – the Mediterranean connects Europe and Africa more than it separates them. So Africa has become our closest neighbour and its destiny a part of our own destiny.

From this perspective Pan-Europe is enlarged to Eurafrika – the small Pan-Europe to a large political continent, stretching from Lapland to Angola, comprising 21 million km² and 360 million people. In the foreseeable future it will be possible to cross this continent under the Straits of Gibraltar with the railroad.

...Europe is the head of Eurafrika – Africa its body. The future of Africa depends on what Europe knows to make of it.’¹²

We see here Coudenhove-Kalergi embracing the concept he had earlier merely danced around, picking up its logical threads and running with them.

His destination was at once more specific and more open-ended than it had been previously. While concluding in general terms that securing German and Italian participation in Europe’s colonisation of Africa was critical both for African development and for European peace, Coudenhove-Kalergi offered three possibilities by which this might take place. These were: first, the redistribution of colonial mandates (namely, those of Cameroon and Togo, which could be

Correspondence’, the official news service of the PEU) (n.d.), HAEU, PAN/EU 28, 771/3/14, 20,21,22 (n.b. this *delata* is dated in the RGVA *opisi* as 29 Aug 1929-18 Feb 1930); R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126

¹² Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Afrika*, 3.; original:

‘Afrika...unser Südamerika.

Afrika ist das tropische Europa. Gibraltar ist unser Panama. Politisch ist Westafrika die südliche Fortsetzung Europas jenseits dieser Meerenge.

Europa ist ein Haus mit vielen Wohnungen und vielen Parteien – aber Afrika ist sein Garten. Während die Sowjetunion uns von Asien, der Atlantische Ozean von Amerika trennt – verbindet das Mittelmeer Europa und Afrika mehr, als es Sie trennt. So ist Afrika unser nächster Nachbar geworden und sein Schicksal ein Teil unseres eigenen Schicksals.

Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt erweitert sich Paneuropa zu Eurafrika – das kleine Paneuropa zu einem großen politischen Kontinent, der von Lappland bis Angola reicht, 21 Millionen m² und 360 Millionen Menschen umfaßt. In absehbarer Zeit wird es möglich sein, diesen Kontinent unter der Straße von Gibraltar mit der Eisenbahn zu durchqueren.

...Europa ist der Kopf Eurafrikas – Afrika dessen Körper. Die Zukunft Afrikas hängt davon ab, was Europa daraus zu machen weiß.’

shared between Germany and Italy); second, the outsourcing of colonisation to ‘chartered companies’, including those from non-colony-owning states;¹³ and third, ‘the personal and economic equality of all European colonists and pioneers on African soil, regardless of native language and citizenship.’¹⁴ This third solution was clearly Coudenhove-Kalergi’s preference. By declaring that ‘This [third] solution is within the spirit of the General Act of the Berlin Conference and, among all the proposals, most within the spirit of Pan-Europe’,¹⁵ he aligned the PEU and the 1884-85 Berlin Conference on the same historical trajectory. Indeed, the next step suggested by Coudenhove-Kalergi was the convocation of a new ‘Africa Conference’, brokered by Britain, at which these options could be frankly discussed, and a ‘common colonisation programme’ worked out.¹⁶

International justice

The framing of Europe’s African colonies in terms of justice was most clearly indebted to German colonialist discourse, which asserted that the stripping of Germany’s colonies at Versailles was

¹³ Coudenhove-Kalergi uses the English term ‘chartered company’, a nod to the role of such companies in the development of the British Empire. He cites the President of the German Reichsbank, Hjalmar Schacht as a supporter of this plan.

¹⁴ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Afrika*, 16-17, quotation is from p.17. Original: ‘die persönliche und wirtschaftliche Gleichberechtigung aller europäischen Kolonisten und Pioniere auf afrikanischem Boden, ohne Rücksicht auf Muttersprache und Staatsbürgerschaft.’ See also R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126, 124

¹⁵ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Afrika*, 17.; original: ‘Diese Lösung liegt im Sinne der Kongoakte und, unter allen Vorschlägen, am meisten im Sinne Paneuropas.’ See also R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126, 124

¹⁶ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Afrika*, 17. See also R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126, 124

flagrantly unjust. This decision had been justified not on the basis that Germany was the defeated power, but on the basis that Germany had ‘mismanaged’ her colonies, and was thus unfit to be awarded a Mandate for the control of any African territory. This was most clearly expressed in the Allied and Associated Powers’ 16 June 1919 reply to German protests regarding the prospective Versailles settlement:

‘Germany’s dereliction in the sphere of colonial civilization has been revealed too completely to admit of the Allied and Associated Powers consenting to make a second experiment and of their assuming the responsibility of again abandoning thirteen or fourteen millions of natives to a fate from which the war has delivered them.’¹⁷

The charge of colonial mis-management was widely seen as a rather flimsy pretext. It was a product of wartime propaganda, an accusation that was assumed rather than proven. The last Governor of German East Africa (and future president of the German Colonial Society), Heinrich Schnee, called it the ‘Colonial Guilt Lie’ (*die koloniale Schuldlüge*).¹⁸ Though Schnee’s argument was certainly most popular in Germany, where it served to mend nationalist pride, stoked feelings of victimisation, and rhymed conceptually with the ‘War Guilt Lie’, it found sympathetic ears elsewhere too. The US Secretary of State and Commissioner to Negotiate Peace at the Paris Peace Conference, Robert Lansing, admitted in his 1921 account of the negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles that few believed that the stripping of Germany’s colonies was the result of an ‘impartial’ assessment of her prior mismanagement of them:

‘If the advocates of the [mandate] system intended to avoid through its operation the appearance of taking enemy territory as the spoils of war, it was a subterfuge which

¹⁷ "Reply of the Allied and Associated Powers to the Observations of the German Delegation on the Conditions of Peace, June 16, 1919," in *Sessional Papers, Volume 1: Third Session of the Thirteenth Parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Special Session 1919, Volume LV* (1919), 14.

¹⁸ H. Schnee, *Die koloniale Schuldlüge*, Berlin, 1924; published in English as H. Schnee, *German Colonization Past and Future: The Truth About the German Colonies*, London, 1926 [1924]. See W.W. Schmokel, *Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919-1945*, New Haven & London, 1964.

deceived no one.’¹⁹

Even Leo Amery, who in 1937 defended the seizure of German colonies as ‘nothing beyond the ordinary verdict of history ... of a war which after all did not start with a Belgian invasion of Germany’, regretted the ‘unctuous rectitude’ of justifying it by reference to Germany’s record of colonial administration.²⁰ As the historian Wolfe Schmokel would later argue, ‘there is no doubt that the Allied statesmen at Versailles, by their needlessly vindictive and insulting language and their continued use of wartime propaganda as facts, had supplied the German colonial revisionists with their strongest arguments.’²¹

They were certainly arguments that the PEU was receptive to. Coudenhove-Kalergi wrote in 1932 that:

‘Germany has not forgotten that it lost its colonies by a breach of trust of the Allied Powers. That it surrendered in 1918 after the Allies had recognized Wilson’s Fourteen Points as the basis for peace.’²²

He continued by quoting Wilson’s Fifth Point, concerning the impartial arbitration of colonial claims, noting that this Point was breached in Versailles, and that the pretext of German mistreatment of natives ‘has long been refuted by impeccable testimonies of expert witnesses from Allied and neutral nations.’²³ This state of affairs, he concluded,

‘embittered the German patriot more than the loss of the colonies itself. So they demand colonies not so much for the colonies sake, but as an expression of their equal footing as a

¹⁹ R. Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative*, Boston & New York, 1921, 155-156.

²⁰ L.S. Amery, The Problem of the Cession of Mandated Territories in Relation to the World Situation, *International Affairs* 16 (1937) 3-22, 6, 4. Amery does try to temper this embarrassment by reasserting that ‘it is fair to remember that that [German] administration had grave blots.’ (4)

²¹ Schmokel, *Dream of Empire*, 66.

²² R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Reparationen und Kolonien, *Panuropa* 8 (1932) 7-11, 9. Original: ‘Deutschland hat nicht vergessen, daß es seine Kolonien durch einen Vertrauensbruch der alliierten Mächte verloren hat. Daß es 1918 kapituliert hat, nachdem sämtliche Alliierten die vierzehn Punkte Wilsons als Friedensgrundlage anerkannt hatten.’

²³ Coudenhove-Kalergi, Reparationen und Kolonien, 9. Original: ‘ist längst durch einwandfreie Zeugnisse von Sachverständigen aus alliierten und neutralen Nationen widerlegt.’

great power and in the name of international justice.’²⁴

On the issue of whether to accede to this demand for the restitution of German colonies, Coudenhove-Kalergi was more equivocal. In the main, he was keen to stress that the solution should not be state-level transferral of territory, but rather some form of supranational cooperation that would diminish the significance of state sovereignty, if not transcend it absolutely. However, in the early 1930s, he did advance the idea of transferring the mandates for Cameroon and Togo to Germany, perhaps to be shared with Italy,²⁵ reasoning that ‘They would redress a large part of the injustice that Germany suffered in Versailles, and thus be a decisive step towards European reconciliation.’²⁶ Though he would later row back from this, saying in 1939 that ‘it would be a danger to give [Germany’s former colonies] back to her’,²⁷ he never shied away from sympathising with the injustice of their seizure, thus laying himself open to accusations of appeasing German expansionism.

However, this charge falls flat on two counts. First, the pursuit of African colonies was not an official concern of the German government, either in Weimar or Nazi administrations, until the

²⁴ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Reparationen und Kolonien*, 9. Original: ‘Dieser Tatbestand erbittert die deutschen Patrioten mehr als der Verlust der Kolonien an sich. So fordern sie Kolonien nicht so sehr um der Kolonien willen, sondern als Ausdruck ihrer gleichberechtigten Großmachtstellung und im Namen internationaler Gerechtigkeit.’ See also a 1939 speech in which Coudenhove-Kalergi, channelling the voice of the ‘typical’ German for an English audience, reported the belief that: ‘Germany must be given equality in Europe. If Germany again surrendered and changed her regime, she must know that she would not be treated as she had been at Versailles, where she had not been treated equally or honourably, where she had been not only impoverished but dishonoured.’ (R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe To-Morrow*, *International Affairs* 18 (1939) 623-640, 640.)

²⁵ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “Plan for a Reform of the League of Nations”, Pan-European Union, Hofburg, Vienna (December 1933), received by the League 6 February 1934; LoN 50/8258/8258, Jacket 1, 1544, p.6

²⁶ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Reparationen und Kolonien*, 10. Original: ‘Sie wäre die Wiedergutmachung eines großen Teiles des Unrechtes, das Deutschland in Versailles erlitten hat, und damit eine entscheidende Etappe zur europäischen Versöhnung.’

²⁷ Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Europe To-Morrow*, 640.

late 1930s.²⁸ Hitler's policy of expansionism was in the first years of Nazi rule confined to European soil, and he made his disdain for African colonialism clear in *Mein Kampf*, dismissing the clamour for the recovery of German colonies as 'the totally impracticable, purely fantastic babble of inflated parlor patriots and bourgeois café politicians',²⁹ and criticising the very concept of colonialism as geographically unbalanced:

'Today many European states are like pyramids stood on their heads. Their European area is absurdly small in comparison to their weight in colonies'³⁰

Indeed, he wrote in horror of France's African empire as tending towards a 'European-African mulatto state. An immense self-contained area of settlement from the Rhine to the Congo, filled with a lower race gradually produced from continuous bastardization.'³¹ For the Hitler of *Mein Kampf*, Eurafrika was not a dream but a nightmare. While the Nazis would (from around 1934) gradually come to embrace the colonial movement, which after all shared with Nazi foreign policy the chief goal of revising the Versailles Treaty, it was the Nazi ideology that had to bend to incorporate colonial thinking rather than vice versa.

The second count on which the charge of appeasement fails is that the Pan-European solution was not only about the *specific political injustice* of the stripping of German colonies under rationalist pretences (itself just one part of Coudenhove-Kalergi's frustration at what he saw as the betrayal of Wilson's ideals at Versailles), but also about the *broader historical injustices* that meant that countries like Czechoslovakia and Poland did not have access to colonies. On one level, this

²⁸ M.E. Townsend, The German colonies and the Third Reich, *Political Science Quarterly* 53 (1938) 186-206. As Townsend notes, the exception to this rule was Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, whose case for Eurafrika/German colonialism was economic.

²⁹ (Vol. II, Ch. 13: "German alliance policy after the war", <http://www.mondopolitico.com/library/meinkampf/v2c13.htm>)

³⁰ (Vol. I, Ch. 4, "Munich", <http://www.mondopolitico.com/library/meinkampf/v1c4.htm>)

³¹ (Vol. II, Ch. 14: "Eastern orientation or Eastern policy", <http://www.mondopolitico.com/library/meinkampf/v2c14.htm>)

was a natural enough argument for him to make: as a member of the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy, who after the dismemberment of his homeland had found himself a Czechoslovak citizen, Coudenhove-Kalergi felt more keenly than most the ‘accident of history’ by which Central Europe had been ‘locked out’ of participation in African colonialism. Moreover, while it was true that these new, ‘artificially’ small states stood to gain by international cooperation through the League of Nations, the Mandate system had fundamentally compromised this vision of internationalism, not only by depriving Germany of its colonies on spurious grounds, but by handing the mandates for control of these colonies to the colonial powers of Western Europe. The Pan-European solution, which offered Central European states a stake in colonialism, was thus presented as the true expression of the League’s internationalist goals.

However, there was another, more instrumental reason for Coudenhove-Kalergi to argue for Central European access to African colonies. This was his fear that the historical injustice that had deprived them of this access could fuel a future European civil war between a Western-European bloc of colony-owning states, supported by London, and an Eastern bloc of non-colony-owning states, supported by Moscow. Coudenhove-Kalergi used the analogy of the American Civil War, casting the Western group as the slave-owning Confederates, unwilling to give up their economic advantage, and the Eastern group as the Unionists, acting in their own economic interests though under an idealist banner of freedom.³² In this case, the freedom in question was anti-colonial national liberation, though Coudenhove-Kalergi warned that ‘the slogan of the right of self determination of coloured people ... would only be a pretext for Eastern Europe to drive out the Western powers and to take their place.’³³ In other words, the fact that some European states had access to colonies while others did not had created a political tinderbox. Speaking of Djibouti, a

³² Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Afrika*, 8-10.; R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126; 121

³³ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126; 121)

French exclave newly surrounded by European powers since the 1935-36 Italian conquest of Abyssinia, Coudenhove-Kalergi wrote that ‘it may be that this African spark could ignite a European fire that could scorch the whole culture of the West.’³⁴ The way to defuse this situation (and therefore avoid European civil war) was not to revisit the injustices of the past, but to look to a cooperative future in which such national injustices lost their meaning and melted away. For Coudenhove-Kalergi and the Pan-Europeans, Eurafica was this future.

Conclusion

The failure of the Pan-European Union to come into being meant that this ideal of a shared colonialism, in which Central Europeans would be equal partners, remained at the level of an ideal. Nevertheless, the popularity of Eurafica as a discourse, outside the bounds of the Pan-European Union and persisting well into the post-war period, mean that this imaginary demands our attention. I conclude by considering two ways in which the Pan-European arguments for Eurafica resonated with deeply held ideas about political space, geographies whose impressions could be detected far beyond the limits of the PEU.

First, it rested on a peculiarly doubled vision of African space, which flipped in meaning depending on which scale one looked at. At the state scale African space was seen as ‘closed’ (i.e. fully carved up by European states), and therefore threatening, since disputes over African territory could easily reflect violence back into Europe, while the imbalance of colony ownership stoked European tension. This connection between the ‘closure’ of political space and a fragile or precarious political situation was shared widely, and perhaps best expressed by Halford Mackinder:

³⁴ R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Djibuti, *Panuropa* 13 (1937) 93-97, 95. Original: ‘es kann sein, daß sich an diesem afrikanischen Funken ein europäischer Brand entzündet, der die ganze Kultur des Abendlandes versengt.’

‘Do you realise that we have now made the circuit of the world, and that every system is now a closed system, and that you can now alter nothing without altering the balance of everything’³⁵

In this imaginary, Central Europe’s apparent exclusion from this closed colonial system was not only unjust, but potentially dangerous, as it risked igniting conflict within Europe itself. However, when seen at the supranational (or ‘Pan-European’) scale, African space was marked not by its fullness, but by its *emptiness*, wherein lay its great promise.³⁶ At this scale, Africa was not a ‘spark’, but a valve through which spatially-rendered ‘pressures’ (political, economic or demographic) could be released. Its emptiness was an invitation: it was as if the old Crusading justification of extra-European *terra nullius* could be resurrected at the Pan-European level, re-imagined as Pan-European *terra communis*.

Second, Africa was seen as a crucible in which a united Europe, or at the very least European solidarity, could be forged. If the colonies had long been sites of experimentation in new technologies of governance by imperial powers, here Africa was to be the site of experimentation for a whole new scale of governance. In this, the General Act of the Berlin Conference loomed large, both as a precedent for this sort of ambition, and as a failure that had to be overcome. European co-operation in Africa, it was hoped, would both performatively create and prove the efficacy of supranational governance, so that it could be introduced in Europe itself. As Carlo Sforza wrote,

‘Simultaneously, and despite the parochialism of the Governments at home, a sort of international solidarity was slowly evolving in the colonies. ... Out of interest if not out of

³⁵ H.J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, London, 1919, 260. For more on the discourse of closed space in this period, see G. Kearns, Closed space and political practice: Frederick Jackson Turner and Halford Mackinder, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2 (1984) 23-34.

³⁶ As Atkinson writes of Italian conceptions of Eurafica, ‘The one constant factor in these arguments was the way in which Africa was considered as little more than a resource or commodity, an expanse of empty resource-laden space which was to be contested and controlled by various of the European colonial powers.’ (Atkinson, "Geopolitics and the Geographical Imagination in Fascist Italy," 186.)

good will, an embryonic European understanding had at last been found in Africa. We could hate one another in Europe, but we felt that between two neighbouring colonies the interest in common was as great as between two white men meeting in the desert.³⁷

This notion of Europe finding itself in Africa attained quasi-mystical overtones, as in the talk of Africa ‘widening the horizon of Europe’;³⁸ Africa was represented as Europe’s mission, quest or destiny in ways that served to reflect the focus squarely back on Europe. And if Europe was finding itself in Africa, then Central European participation in colonialism became about much more than fairness in profiting from its resources, more even than the prestige of owning colonies: it was about sharing in the European project, a project that was being produced in Africa for consumption back in Europe.

³⁷ C. Sforza, *Europe and Europeans: A Study in Historical Psychology and International Politics*, London, 1936, 202-203. Sforza was referring to the pre-1914 situation, though as can be deduced from his nostalgic tone, he too was arguing for ‘a sort of European Consortium’ through which to administer African colonies. (Sforza, *Europe and Europeans*, 215.)

³⁸ c.f. R.N. Coudenhove-Kalergi, “The African Problem” (n.d. [c.1929]), RGVA, 554/5/53, 118-126; 125-6)

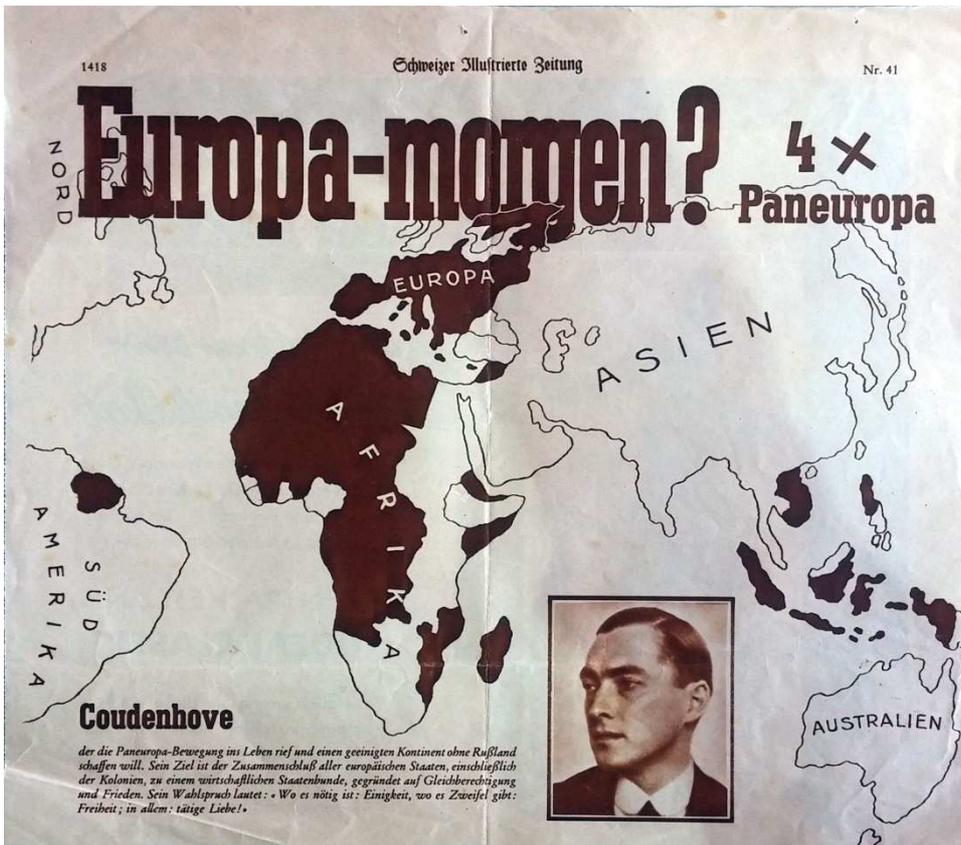


Fig. 1: R. Coudenhove-Kalergi and Aristide Briand's respective world-views (as represented by the *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung*) (Archives de la Ville et de la Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg, 2 Z 19)

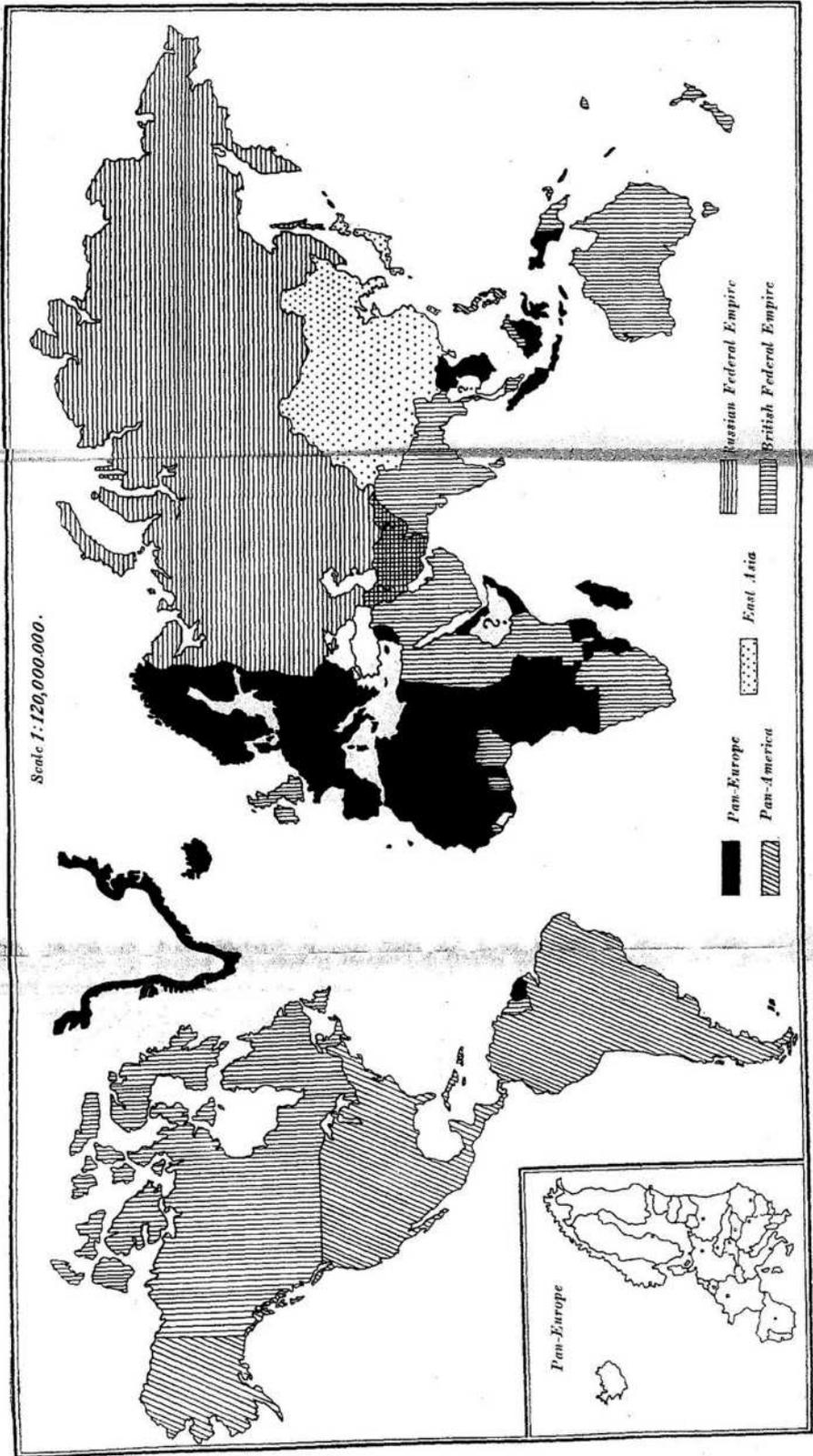


Fig. 2: The Pan-European World Map

5. JAHRGANG

FEBER 1929

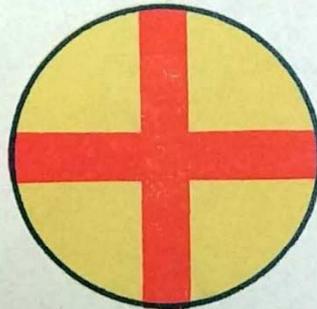
HEFT 2

PANEUROPA

R. N. COUDENHOVE-KALERGI

AFRIKA

R. N. COUDENHOVE-KALERGI



PANEUROPA-VERLAG
WIEN-LEIPZIG-PARIS

PREIS DIESES HEFTES: Mk. —90, ö. S 1'50

JAHRESABONNEMENT 10 HEFTE (PORTO EXKL.): Mk. 5'—, ö. S 8'50

Fig. 3: *Paneuropa* journal, Vol.5, Issue 2 (February 1929)