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THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

By KLAUS MEHNERT

When it became known recently that an Italian plane had flown from Europe to Japan and back again, there was rejoicing among all the members of the Axis because they considered this flight as a symbol for the resumption of direct connections between Europe and East Asia. The European and the Asiatic ends of the Axis have shown that they are able, individually and without direct connections, to inflict defeat after defeat upon their enemies. Yet there is no doubt that the establishment of direct communications would add tremendously to their strength.

Until recently, few people ever gave any thought to this matter, as it seemed too far off and unreal. However, since the occupation of Burma, the Andamans, and the Nicobars by Japan; since the appearance of Japanese warships in the Indian Ocean; and since Marshal Rommel's drive toward the Suez Canal and Marshal von Bock's drive toward the Caspian Sea, the question arises with increasing frequency: will there soon be a direct connection between the Axis powers?

The object of this article is to study the problems involved with the opening of a connection between East Asia and Europe via the Indian Ocean.

ANYONE who speaks of the restoration of large-scale communications between Europe and Asia has the southern sea route around Asia in mind. For that reason, we shall direct our attention to the Indian Ocean, which, although it is the third largest ocean in the world and, with its 30 million square miles, almost three times the size of Africa, is far less known than other seas.

In its political history, the Indian Ocean differs fundamentally from all the other seas. While we find a constant intermingling of numerous political and military forces in the Atlantic and the Pacific, to say nothing of the Mediterranean and the Baltic, the Indian Ocean has, during the last thousand years, always been dominated by a single power at one time, if one excepts the periods of transition. Its history consists of three layers, so to speak: the Arabian/Mohammedan, the Portuguese, and the British.

KORAN AND SWORD

In the centuries after Islam arose, Arabian and other Mohammedan peoples overran the Indian Ocean in an irresistible

mixture of mission-, merchant-, and warrior-spirit. As the Indian Ocean had previously not been embraced by one power, they found it politically unorganized, and nowhere did they come up against any large-scale resistance. Hence they had only to conduct local wars, and by the end of the fifteenth century they possessed all the key positions of the ocean, as shown in Map I.

Of course, this did not mean that they held all the coasts with their hinterland. It was often only a small ruling group of Moslems which seized the power at strategic points, without bothering much about what happened on the remaining stretches of coast (which had little value for trade) or in the interior. *They were satisfied as long as their ships firmly held the maritime control of the Indian Ocean and its centers of commerce.* The slight resistance of the native population and the obvious fact that no serious opponent could arise against them in the entire Indian Ocean caused them to neglect safeguarding their position from a military point of view. They could not suspect

that one day enemies would force their way into their ocean *from outside*.

THE PORTUGUESE LAKE

When in November 1497 Vasco da Gama sailed round the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean, he very quickly found out that the ocean was under Mohammedan control, and that Portuguese trade would only be possible here after the Moslem power had been overthrown. During the next few years, swarms of Portuguese fleets thrust into the Indian Ocean and, in a series of naval battles, especially that of Diu in 1509, broke the Mohammedan might. Twelve years after Vasco da Gama's first return from India, the Indian Ocean as far as the Malayan Peninsula and the East Indian archipelago had become a Portuguese lake, dominated by a dense chain of Portuguese bases (see Map I).

The Portuguese period did not last much more than a hundred years. When the last Portuguese king died in 1580 without issue, more than half a dozen foreign pretenders laid claim to the Portuguese throne, until the King of Spain succeeded in his candidacy by force of arms, thus making Portugal part of Spain.

At that time, the Spanish Empire was advancing in full sail into the hopeless struggle against the rising sea powers of England and Holland, and Portugal was drawn into this struggle against her will. One of the main sources of Dutch wealth

was the resale to northern Europe of the goods which the Portuguese ships brought to Lisbon from the Indian Ocean. When Spain excluded the Dutch from Lisbon, they decided to obtain the goods in their countries of origin. Together with their English allies, they penetrated the Portuguese lake, which had hitherto been defended so jealously against foreigners. Around the year 1600, the Dutch and the English East India Companies were formed, and, with the same *elan* with which the Portuguese had sailed into the Indian Ocean a century earlier, their successors now threw themselves into the fray. The Portuguese struggled stubbornly, although they had also to fight against the Arabs, who had come to life again and reconquered the east coast of Africa as far as Cape Delgado.

In 1640, Portugal tore herself away from Spain by means of a revolution. But in the

fifty-nine years of her "Spanish captivity" and in the following twenty-eight years in which she fought with Spain for her independence, she lost all her possessions in the Indian Ocean with the exception of Mozambique and her three Indian relics of the past, Diu, Daman, and Goa.

THE BRITISH PERIOD

The Dutch and English fleets appeared in the Indian Ocean as enemies of the Portuguese and, at the same time, as rivals of each other. At first they went after everything Portuguese that they could lay their hands on. To the same extent, however, to which the might of



Map I

Portugal melted away, the rivalry between the newcomers grew more acute and turned into wars. Then a delimitation was gradually formed, by which the Dutch got the East Indian archipelago, Capetown, Cochin, Ceylon, and Malacca, among other less important places, while the English held all the rest.

Other European states had only a small share in the fate of the Indian Ocean. For a while, the French had a strong position in India and on the islands of the southwestern part of the ocean, from which, however, they were ousted by the English. They also occupied Madagascar and a small part of Somaliland, with the harbor of Djibouti. Colonies were acquired by Italy in Somaliland and Eritrea and by Germany in East Africa.

England wanted to have the Indian Ocean entirely to herself, and she made use of every European war to enrich herself. While the European continent was constantly tearing itself to pieces in fratricidal wars, the British Empire grew.

This is how England's possessions in the Indian Ocean profited by Europe's wars:

War	Country	Lost to England
Seven Years' War	France	Almost all possessions in India
Napoleonic Wars	France	Mauritius Rodriguez Chagos Is. Seychelles Is.
	Netherlands	Cape Colony Cochin Ceylon Malacca
First World War	Germany	East Africa

Furthermore, England has made good use of the second World War by temporarily occupying not only Italian Somaliland and Eritrea but also parts of Madagascar.

So, in the end, all the shores of the Indian Ocean, with the exception of the Dutch East Indies, Mozambique (Portuguese), Madagascar (French), and a few other unimportant possessions, were in British hands. The Dutch losses were especially tragic. When Napoleon included Holland in his empire, England declared that she must consider Holland as an enemy and took away her possessions with a similar justification with which she has now occupied parts of the French colonial empire: otherwise, she

reasoned, Napoleon might have occupied these territories. When Napoleon's supremacy came to an end, however, England had no thought of returning the territories which she had occupied "for protection." (Malacca lost its importance shortly afterwards to its neighbor Singapore.) In spite of these unfortunate experiences with England, Holland has in this war voluntarily done that which Portugal had to be forced to do in 1581: she chained the fate of her remaining colonial possessions to a gravely undermined empire. The result has been the loss of all her rich possessions in the East Indian archipelago.

The Portuguese had built up their empire in the Indian Ocean via the route around Africa. Since there was no Suez Canal in those days, they paid little attention to the northwestern part of the ocean, and, since Australia had not yet been discovered, no attention at all to its southeastern part. Although they tried to capture Aden, they did not press this attempt, and finally they were satisfied with the key position of Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. Compared with the Portuguese, British ambition in the Indian Ocean went much further. With a tenacity and farsightedness which one cannot fail to admire, although one might deplore the methods, England built up an empire that, as can be seen from Map II, completely dominated the Indian Ocean with all its approaches.

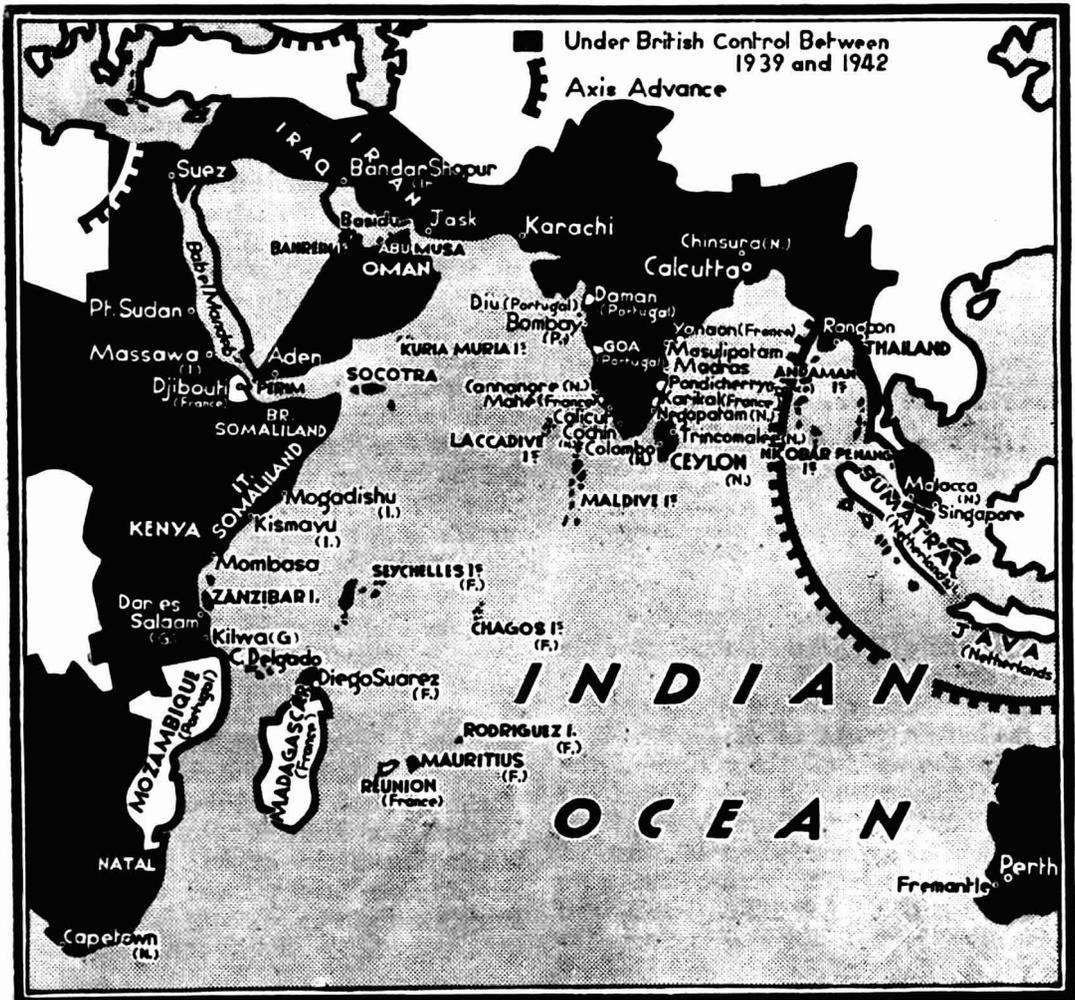
If an inhabitant of Mars were to be shown a map of the Indian Ocean, he could, if he understood the basic principles of strategy, immediately say, without any knowledge of the history of this ocean, at which points the dominating power would establish its fortified bases. If we look at the British possessions in the Indian Ocean one by one, we find that the English have planted their flag at every strategic point.

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM

The most important approach to the Indian Ocean, that through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, is completely in the hands of the British, whose supremacy is supported by seven pillars: Egypt, the

Sudan, Perim, Aden, Somaliland, and Kuria Muria. For her domination of this sea route, England could not in her wildest dreams have imagined anything more perfect than that which Nature has supplied with the island of Perim. It is situated at the narrowest part of the Strait of Bab el Mandeb between Africa and Arabia, two miles off the Arabian coast. Perim possesses a good harbor formed by an old crater open toward the southwest. The island was annexed by England in 1857 in expectation of the building of the Suez Canal and was later fortified.

But an island has some disadvantages, and it is as well to have more than one string to one's bow. Fortunately for England, there was the ideal harbor of Aden on the south coast of Arabia, a hundred miles east of the Strait of Bab el Mandeb. Not far from that place, where once the Queen of Sheba reigned, a British ship was stranded in 1837. It was said in London that its crew had been treated in an unfriendly manner. This had to be avenged. Two years later, Aden was captured by a British fleet and was annexed. After having first been placed under the administration of British

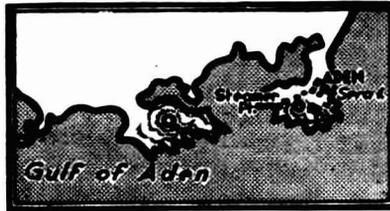


Map II
BRITISH POSSESSIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The pre-British owners are shown in parenthesis (F=France, G=Germany, I=Italy, N=Netherlands, P=Portugal). Areas around the Indian Ocean owned up to 1942 by other powers than the British are shown in white with the full names of their owners in parenthesis

India, it was made a crown colony with its own governor in 1937. To make quite sure, Aden's vast hinterland, embracing the entire southeastern part of Arabia, southeast of the line Bab el Mandeb/Bahrein, has been placed under British rule. Aden's chief weakness is its lack of fresh water. It must depend partly on rain water collected in cisterns.

In order to render their position perfect, the British wanted possessions on the African side, too, and so that part of Somaliland which borders on the Gulf of Aden was made a British protectorate in the years 1884/97. Through the recent occupation of Italian Somaliland and of the Italian possession of Eritrea, the British possessions have been further extended, and dark clouds have gathered over French Somaliland and the town of Djibouti.



England also took the islands at the mouth of the Gulf of Aden. In 1854, the five high, rocky islands known by the name of Kuria Muria were occupied by the British. Although they did not do much to fortify the islands, they achieved their main purpose, namely, to prevent others from gaining a foothold there.

EVERYONE CALLED MARY

Consisting chiefly of a plateau 1,500 feet high and mountains rising up to 5,000 feet, Socotra in ancient Egyptian times supplied a great deal of incense and was known to the world of those days as the "Terraces of Incense." When the Portuguese captured the island in 1507, they discovered that part of the population was composed of Christians, who had in the dim past come to Socotra by some means from the Near East. Incidentally, the Portuguese abandoned Socotra again four years later, since it was of only limited value before the building of the Suez Canal.

In the seventeenth century, Christian missionaries came to the island. They found that some of the people still called themselves Christians, although their re-

ligious customs were a curious mixture of various religions. When Father Vincenzo asked one woman what she was called, she replied: "Mary." And the next one? "Mary, too." The third, fourth, and fifth were also called Mary, and it turned out that all the women bore this name. In spite of the religious fervor evidenced by this strange custom, Islam nevertheless later on gained the upper hand here.

When the Suez Canal was being built, England annexed the island in 1886. If anyone wants to know how this took place, he has only to look up "Sokotra" (Socotra) in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (eleventh edition). There he will find the laconic statement:

"The opening of the Suez Canal route led to the island being secured for Great Britain." It would be impossible to express more clearly how the Englishman considered the growth of his empire as a thing of the utmost naturalness. "The opening of the Suez Canal route led to . . ." That tells the whole story.

INDIRECT RULE

The northern branch of the great Europe/Asia highway, that going to the Persian Gulf, is also well controlled. Here Great Britain has built up her position, not so much on the possession of her own bases, as on the control of the coastal states, with the object of preventing other powers from gaining a foothold there. The English succeeded in breaking the Portuguese hold on the Persian Gulf in 1622, when ships of the East India Company attacked Hormuz in the midst of peace and destroyed it. This rather embarrassed King James of England, not because of any moral qualms he may have had, but because the Prince of Wales was to marry a princess of Spain-Portugal. However, the royal conscience was salved by the East India Company with £10,000. Since then, no serious competitor has set foot in the Persian Gulf.

The most important coastal state, Iran (formerly Persia), has been under British control since the early nineteenth century. Whenever the Persians showed a will of their own, there was war. In 1907, British supremacy in southern Persia was recognized even by England's most serious rival—Russia. However, the able and ambitious ruler who mounted the Persian throne in 1925 under the name of Reza Shah Pahlevi, succeeded, by skillfully playing off the British and the Bolsheviks against each other, in making his country independent again. Of course, this made him a thorn in the flesh of the British. So the first opportunity which presented itself—the present war and the alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union—was used to remove the Shah and to reoccupy southern Persia, which possesses added importance by virtue of its oil wells. However, the triumph was marred by the fact that the Soviet Union simultaneously sent her soldiers into northern Iran. The Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran continues.

Iraq, with its great harbor of Basra, was taken away from Turkey in the Great War and made a British mandate. It is true that it was recognized as an independent state by England in 1927. But, as soon as it showed that it was serious about its independence, British and, recently, American troops marched into the country. Saudi Arabia has shown more skill at maintaining its independence; but the Gulf's west coast, which belongs to Saudi Arabia, has no harbors and is of no strategic importance. Although the state of Oman, which owns a large part of the Arabian coast, has its own sultan, it is actually under the British Indian Government, which has a British resident in the capital and harbor town of Muscat.

JUST IN CASE

The English did not care to rely entirely on this indirect control of the Persian Gulf. For that reason, they took possession of the Bahrein Islands in the latter part of the nineteenth century. These islands, which had been ruled by Arabian sheiks since the Portuguese had been

driven out in 1622, have risen considerably in importance during the last few years through the discovery of large oil deposits and their exploitation.

"Just in case," England occupied the town of Basidu at the western end of the island of Kishm and the island of Abu Musa. Neither is at present of any importance but could in an emergency be developed into a base. To the east of the strait of Hormuz she controls the coastal area of Jask. In this way, the British have provided for all eventualities, even if their policy of indirect domination of the Persian Gulf should one day founder.

The central part of the great shipping route through the Indian Ocean is controlled by England through the possession of Ceylon. When Ceylon fell to England through the Vienna peace treaty of 1815, the King of Ceylon, who had ruled under Dutch supremacy and could look back on a royal family tree two thousand years old, was deposed and exiled. The great commercial port of Colombo and the naval port of Trincomalee, one of the largest natural harbors in the world, are the two supports of British rule. Trincomalee was a British naval and military station until 1905, and has been made one again since 1938.

We need not follow the shipping route further east, since its next stations, Burma, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Malayan Peninsula, the Straits of Malacca, and Singapore (Shonan) no longer belong to Great Britain.

SWORD AND DOWRY

The northern flank of the great shipping route was secured by England through the possession of India. The events of the last few months, the Japanese advance and the constantly increasing unrest in India, have made the loss of this rich storehouse of men and raw materials by England very probable. But for the moment India still serves as a base for British warships and planes.

Since the very first English naval victories against the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century, the English step by step conquered one harbor and one prov-

ince after another, until finally all India was under their rule. They have built up a strong position on her coasts. But it is no longer harbors like Goa, the first European possession on Indian soil and once the seat of an archbishop (with authority over the bishops of East Africa, Malacca, Macao, Nanking, Peking, and Japan!), which play the same important part as in Arabian and Portuguese times.

Now India has a new constellation of four harbors. These are, from west to east: first, Karachi, the most important harbor in Northwest India, in British hands since 1843 and equipped with good piers. Second comes Bombay, the largest port on the west coast of India, with huge docks and many railway connections to the interior. Bombay is a good example of the three strata in the history of the Indian Ocean. Till 1524, the city was under Arabian rule, then under Portuguese, and, when Charles II of England married the Infanta Catherina of Portugal, she was persuaded to present her royal spouse with Bombay as part of her dowry. Next comes Madras, British since 1640, the leading harbor of the east coast in spite of its unfavorable shallow shores. And fourth, Calcutta, the great center of industry which, founded in 1690 by the English near the mouths of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, is today one of the busiest ports of the world, where the docks extend for more than ten miles along the Hooghly River.

To the west of the southernmost point of India and near the main shipping route lie the Laccadive Islands. Their name is derived from the Malabar word for "a hundred thousand islands." This, however, is an exaggeration, since actually there are only thirteen, eight of which are inhabited. They, too, belonged first to the Arabs, then the Portuguese, and finally the English, who placed them under the British Indian administration.

THE TWO SOUTHERN ENTRANCES

South of the great shipping route, the geographical conditions are opposite to

those in the north. In the south, there is no continent far and wide, and the ocean stretches away to the antarctic ice cap. Nevertheless, Great Britain has built up an excellent position even here. The southeastern entrance to the Indian Ocean was made secure by the British possession of Australia. But since Japan occupied the East Indian archipelago and has thus forced herself between Australia and India, Australia has lost much of her strategic importance for the Indian Ocean.

To the southwest of the ocean, South Africa, especially Capetown, forms a cornerstone of British rule in this region. But here, too, there is unrest. Again and again the discontent of the descendants of the Dutch colonists, whom England incorporated in her empire as recently as forty years ago at the cost of a bitter war, becomes apparent.

Since the recent occupation of Italian Somaliland, the entire East African coast, with the exception of Portuguese Mozambique, has been under British rule. After the collapse of the Portuguese rule, the coastal areas north of Mozambique formed a part of the Arabian empire of Zanzibar, which was ruled from the island of that name. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, England, Germany, and Italy divided the coast among themselves. The strategic island of Zanzibar was made a protectorate by the British. (Its commanding importance is well expressed in the African proverb: "When you play the flute in Zanzibar, all Africa as far as the lakes will dance.")

During the first World War, England took German East Africa, and during the present one Italian Somaliland. The coast has a number of good harbors: Kilindini near Mombasa, the finest landlocked harbor on the east coast of Africa; Dar es Salaam, built by the Germans and still German in its appearance as a town; and Kismayu in Italian Somaliland.

STORMY PARADISE

The British island positions in the western part of the Indian Ocean are

just as important as the continental ones. Port Louis on Mauritius is one of the best harbors in the Indian Ocean. In addition, the island has the strategic advantage of being surrounded almost entirely by a reef, which renders hostile landings more difficult. Uninhabited at the time of its discovery by the Portuguese, it was temporarily held by the Dutch and named after Maurice of Nassau. In 1715, Mauritius was occupied by the French, renamed Île de France, and used for the cultivation of spices. During the Napoleonic Wars, France lost numerous islands in the Indian Ocean to England, among them also this one, which was given its old name of Mauritius again.

Mauritius would be a paradise if it were not for its ill-famed, savage "Mauritius hurricanes." Moreover, Mauritius has been afflicted by a number of unusually violent epidemics. In 1854, for instance, 17,000 people died of cholera, and 30,000 of malaria in 1867. The population was originally composed mainly of French Creoles. For that reason the French language and the Catholic faith are still predominant on the island. During the last few decades, however, the immigration of other races, especially of Indians, has been very considerable. The fact that today almost three quarters of the population are Indian, sharing the fate of India with their hearts, has an unfavorable effect on Great Britain's position in Mauritius. Incidentally, it is on Mauritius that the deposed Reza Shah Pahlevi is "vacationing."

Three hundred and forty-four miles to the east of Mauritius there is the island of Rodriguez. It was populated by the French from Mauritius and later taken by the British. The population is made up chiefly of the descendants of African slaves.

Between Rodriguez and Ceylon there is the Chagos archipelago with the island of Diego Garcia, which possesses a fine harbor formed by coral barriers and accessible even to large ships. This group was also originally settled by the French

and is now administrated from Mauritius. It is important because it is situated at the point where the shipping route Cape-town/Colombo crosses that from Aden to Fremantle and has for that reason been made a coaling station.

The Maldivé Islands, whose sultan is tributary to the British administration in Ceylon, are north of the Chagos Islands and near the shipping route Aden/Colombo. The northernmost island of this group, lying almost on the shipping route, is Minikoi, whose highest elevation is only nineteen feet above sea level.

BURNT SPICES

The domination of the eastern part of the Indian Ocean is made easier for England by the possession of the Seychelles, a group of ninety islands. The main island is Mahé with the excellent port of Victoria, which is at the same time the capital of the Seychelles. Uninhabited when discovered by the Portuguese, the islands were annexed by France in 1742 and named after a high official at the court of Louis XIV. Since the French were not successful in growing spices on Mauritius because of the hurricanes, but still hoped to obtain large profits from breaking the Dutch spice monopoly, they secretly began to cultivate spices on the Seychelles, islands that did not suffer from hurricanes. There was great consternation when one day a ship appeared flying the English flag. In order to keep their fragrant secret, they set fire to the spice plantations. In the end, it turned out that the vessel was a French slave ship, sailing under the English flag on account of her fear of English ships.

Like the other islands, the Seychelles also fell to England in the Napoleonic Wars. At first they were under the Mauritius administration, till in 1903 they became a crown colony with their own governor. At the beginning of this century, they gained a certain tragic fame as the place of exile for three African kings deposed by the British, the kings of Ashanti, Uganda, and Unyoro.

BRITAIN'S INDIAN OCEAN EMPIRE

(including those areas occupied since 1939 and those lost in 1942)

	<i>Sq. miles</i>	<i>Population</i>
Union of South Africa	472,550	9,600,000
Tanganyika	360,000	5,106,000
Zanzibar	640	138,000
Kenya	224,960	3,366,000
Italian Somaliland ...	190,000	1,000,000
British Somaliland ..	68,000	344,000
Eritrea	46,000	450,000
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan	969,600	6,000,000
Egypt	383,000	16,000,000
Aden (with hinterland)	438,000	367,000
Perim	6	1,200
Socotra	1,380	12,000
Kuria Muria Is.	28	100
Oman	82,000	500,000
Southern Iran (incl. Jask)	300,000	7,000,000
Iraq	143,200	2,900,000
Bahrain Is.	232	120,000
India	1,808,679	360,000,000
Ceylon	25,332	5,400,000
Maldiva Is.	115	70,000
Laccadive Is.	745	14,000
Andaman Is.	2,508	20,000
Nicobar Is.	635	10,000
Burma	261,610	14,670,000
British Malaya	51,172	5,230,000
West Australia	975,920	465,000
Mauritius	720	415,000
Seychelles Is.	156	31,000
Chagos Is.	43	800
Rodriguez	42	7,300
Total	6,807,273	439,237,400

WHO RULES THE WAVES?

This long list of British possessions in the Indian Ocean, shown in our table, is impressive. But it must not be over-estimated. The history of the Indian Ocean, which we have purposely referred to again and again in our study, shows that, *to dominate this ocean, it is sufficient to possess naval supremacy and a few strategic bases.* The Arabian period in the Indian Ocean came to an end with the destruction of the Arabian fleet and the loss of a few bases (especially Sofala, Zanzibar, Hormuz, Calicut, and Malacca) during the ten years from 1501 to 1511, although the major part of the coasts still remained under Arabian control for

a long time. Portuguese rule over the ocean was destroyed with the loss of the Portuguese fleet and a few key positions (especially Malacca, Ceylon, Hormuz, and Cochin), although the Portuguese still retain remnants of their possessions in the Indian Ocean to this day. In the same way, the destruction of British supremacy would only require the removal of the bulk of the British fleet and the occupation of a few key positions. There is, however, one difference as compared with former times: air bases from which the Indian sea route might be disrupted must also be occupied or destroyed.

The Axis is well on the way towards breaking British naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean. This process need not necessarily take place in the Indian Ocean itself. Wherever British—and, in view of their partnership, American—warships are sunk, whether in Pearl Harbor, the Mediterranean, at Cape Kuantan, in the North Sea, at the Solomon Islands, or in the Atlantic, British naval supremacy over the Indian Ocean is being attacked.

Of course, it will not be possible to prevent a guerrilla war, especially on the part of Allied submarines. But long before England and the USA, who were quite unprepared for this development of the war, have created a really efficient submarine arm, the war will, we hope, be over. Furthermore, the fall of Alexandria would relieve a considerable part of the Italian Navy from its duties in the Mediterranean and enable it to move into the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Which bases, the reader will ask, will the Axis have to occupy in order to safeguard the sea route? We do not know how the naval authorities would answer this question. The answer of the historian and the political observer would be more or less as follows:

The first prerequisite, the control of the eastern entrance to the Indian Ocean, has been fulfilled by Japan through the capture of Singapore and the entire northeastern part of the ocean. The second prerequi-

site is the capture of the Suez Canal and the destruction of the British position on Perim in the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and preferably of Aden. In the light of history it can be assumed that, with these positions in the hands of the Axis, traffic could be opened through the Indian Ocean which would be less hazardous than the war-time trans-Atlantic traffic of the Allies and certainly far less dangerous than the Anglo-American routes through the Arctic Ocean and the Mediterranean. Of the remaining bases, Karachi, Bombay, Ceylon, and Kilindini are probably the most important. But, in view of the weakness of the British fleet and air force in the Indian Ocean, their occupation would not seem absolutely necessary, especially as the possibility exists that the awakening Indian and Arabian nationalism would, without outside aid, soon drive the unwanted masters into the sea.

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On account of the fact that hitherto it has always only been *one* power at a time which possessed naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean, this supremacy has proved easier to gain than in any other sea. The Arabs felt so secure in the Indian Ocean that the attack by the Portuguese took them by surprise and disposed of them within a few years. The Portuguese, for their part, believed to have made the Indian Ocean their own lake by carefully keeping its geography secret. When the English and the Dutch found their way into the ocean in spite of this, the Portuguese were fated to lose their significance within a short time. Today it appears as if Great Britain were in a similar position.

Just as was the case with the Portuguese, England's weakness is to be found in the fact that she is an outside power without being properly anchored in the millions of people living on the shores of the Indian Ocean. There are far less than two million Anglo-Saxon Britons living between Capetown, Karachi, Calcutta, and Fremantle. Only the fact that the Indian Ocean area has hitherto not developed

any political forces of its own, and that until 1941 no serious rival appeared from outside, enabled the British, with this astonishingly small number, to turn the third largest ocean in the world, as well as the regions surrounding it with 6.8 million square miles and 434 million inhabitants, into their own lake.

In view of the pressure exerted on British supremacy in the Indian Ocean—from outside by the Axis and from inside by revolutionary nationalism—the loss of the Indian sea route lies within the bounds of possibility.

* * *

The creation of an Axis sea route would enable the war economies of East Asia and Greater Europe to supplement each other extensively. The list of goods which East Asia would get from Europe and, vice versa, which Europe would get from East Asia, is a very long one.

At the Pacific war council held at the White House on September 1, the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, expressed anxiety that a successful contact between Japan and Germany, if realized, would prove a great menace to the Allies. He urged the Allies to make all possible preparations for such a development.

Lord Halifax's anxiety is well founded. The opening of an Axis shipping route through the Indian Ocean would be a catastrophe for the Allies. Perhaps they have managed so far to persuade themselves that they can defeat each end of the Axis one at a time. But even they know that their chances are nil if Europe and East Asia, if the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the Sea of Japan are linked by direct communications.

The new British attack on Madagascar on September 10 shows that the British fully realize the importance of the Indian Ocean and the acute danger of its loss. With reference to the recent American landings on the west coast of Africa, the

Japan Times has rightly said: "It is because the Indian Ocean is exposed to the menace of the Japanese Navy that America chose the land route for the transportation of her troops to Egypt."

On the other hand, the establishment of a southern sea connection would fur-

ther increase the confidence of the Axis. The contact between the mighty currents of power now fighting in isolation, on the one side in Asia and on the other in Europe, against their foes, would clearly indicate to the two *Gross-raums* that they are united, not only by ideals, but in reality.

