

The Coming World War

The following is the final chapter of a short book by E. Varga on "The Present World Crisis in Capitalist Economy," and has been translated by W. H. Mainwaring for "The Plebs."

WHILE during the next few years the European proletariat will be engaged in its struggle with capital, the three great Imperialistic Powers—the U. S., England and Japan—will be engaged in a struggle amongst themselves, a struggle for world power and dominion. It is impossible to avoid this conflict under the laws of capitalist society. By the elimination of Russia and the impoverishment of Central Europe the world market has been reduced. These Powers have now weapons in hand to decide who is to be master.

The conflict has already begun. The most aggressive at the moment is the United States. During the war she rose to the position of being the greatest industrial power in the world.* Now the great bourgeoisie of America, with Harding at the helm, is engaged in the endeavour to reduce the political and maritime power of England.

Already the differences between England and Japan on the one side and of the U. S. on the other are becoming wider and more immediately pressing. The U. S. seeks to secure herself against England's monopoly in exploiting the oilfields of Mesopotamia. Strong speeches in the Senate have referred to the fact that England obtains cheap American petroleum and sells it at a much dearer rate to American ships in Asia. England is charged with attempting to create a monopoly outside of the U. S. There are continual references in the American press and periodicals to the possibility of war with England, and protestations were made against the creation of the League of Nations, which, through the absence of America and the exclusion of Germany and Russia, has become a mere instrument for the exercise of world power by England—the award of the Pacific island of Yap to Japan being an example. England is embittered by the competition of American industry which tends to force her out of the century old monopoly of the world markets, amongst others of the coal industry.†

The U. S. refusal to give favourable consideration to the question of the mutual cancellation of war debts amongst the allied nations has aroused considerable dissension in England. The stage is being prepared for open war. The U. S. naval construction programme has been so far increased that in a few years the English fleet will be outstripped by one half. The army is also to be enormously increased. The creation of new weapons of war, particularly the discovery of new deadly liquids and gases, is being fostered. The Panama Canal is to be fortified and defended with the most powerful artillery in the world.

General R. Lee Bullard, Commandant of the First Division of the American Expeditionary Forces in France, 1918, in an address to the Republican Club declared that America, since she was unprepared for war, was dependent during the war itself upon the British proletariat, and that British troops had to stand between American troops and the enemy until they became accustomed to the conditions. This state of things must not recur.

*According to Garry's address to the Iron and Steel Institute (The American Empire by Scott Nearing, p. 187) the U. S. proportion of the total world economy in 1920 consisted of:—

6 per cent. of the total population		7 per cent. of the earth's surface.	
25 per cent. of the Gold	52 per cent. of the Coal		
25 " " " Wheat	66 " " " Petroleum		
40 " " " Steel &	60 " " " Copper		
40 " " " Iron	60 " " " Cotton		
40 " " " Lead	60 " " " Aluminium		
50 " " " Silver			
50 " " " Zinc	75 " " " Malze		

†The coal exports of the United States in thousands of tons were:—

	To France	To Italy.	To Holland.	To Sweden.
In 1914	47	776	—	47
In 1919	532	1,633	722	253
In 1920	3,646	2,388	2,147	1,247

America must have an army prepared for war. It is the same kind of argument used in Germany before the war. Competition for the reduced markets and the enormous development of war industries tend to force on similar policies.

The coming war will, if the proletariat's victory does not intervene, completely destroy capitalism. As the last world war gave rise to the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia, and the impoverishment and partial breakdown of capitalism in Central Europe, so will the next war utterly destroy world capitalism.

War with America

A Clash Which is Near at Hand

A fanatical consumptive student at Sarajevo assassinated a scrofulous, mentally-tainted Austrian Archduke. And out of the incident came the war which, when it settled into its stride, was seen to be a struggle between England and Germany to decide the world's commercial supremacy. Some day in the near future a Japanese policeman will drop a brick on the pet corn of an American missionary, or a California merchant will mistake a Japanese laundryman for a member of the I.W.W. and plunk a bullet into his midriff. And when the smoke and dust have cleared, it will be found that England and the United States are deciding, in advanced civilised manner, the question of the world's commercial supremacy.

World Stage is Being Cleared for Next Last War

Today is the day of Imperialism. The capitalist system has reached its apex in the militant Imperialism of the Great Powers.

Out of the struggle for markets in which to dispose of surplus goods comes war. The imperative necessity of the English capitalists is to capture some of the markets which America dominates, and out of that conflict of interests war is inevitable.

There the other factors which are hastening the progress of events—

America held aloof from the Allies. It waged war distinct from them.

America followed the policy in the case of the peace settlement and the Allies followed it in the division of the spoils; a division which concerned itself with (a) territory, (b) communications, and (c) oil.

Territory means raw materials. America was left nothing.

America was given none of the German cables. After considerable snarling the Atlantic difficulty was solved. But communication across the Pacific is still denied America.

The trouble over Yap still goes on.

Yap is a small island of the Carolines and from it leads a cable to Guam and thence to Frisco. With Yap in Japanese hands at a time of war America, obviously, would be cut off from Asia. As a kind of set-off America obtained from China the right to establish a high-power wireless station at Shanghai. But some person or persons unknown whispered a few threatening words in the ears of the Chinese government and the concession was cancelled.

So much for territory and communication—

Now for oil.

Oil is the life-blood of modern capitalist production; it is the life-blood—or death-blood—of war.

Without oil, the carriers of wholesale death are paralysed.

Without oil, the aeroplane, the tank, the motor are as harmless as the toy soldiers a benevolent capitalist system manufactures to turn the first thought of the babes in the right direction.

The domestic demand of the United States now exceeds the supply. And the outside areas, except Mexico are monopolised by England—England saw to that at the Peace Conference when it gave itself mandates over all territory suspected of carrying oil.

On May 23 in the House of Commons Commander Monsell reported that the whole of the British Navy would shortly consist of oil-burning vessels.

That means that England has at last "struck oil" in quantities.

The cables haven't said where, but the May issue of the "Empire Mail"—a paper in which the moves of shrewdest capitalists in the world are shown—said it in detail. The new finds are in north and northwest Canada.

The United States is fuming with a petulance that hides something like savageness because of this new turn. On April 30 (recorded in the Australian press on May 2) the U. S. government sent a note to Holland in which it shrieked (in diplomatic language, of course) because the Dutch company was excluding American capital from oil ventures, while allowing foreign capital other than American to participate. The "foreign" capital was English!

There are a number of factors other than those mentioned. They will form the subject of future exposures of the tragedy which is now being prepared; with one side or other as the hero, with one side or the other as the villain, and with the working class (if history is repeated) as the poor but honest village idiot.

It will be asked: Where does Japan enter the picture?

Japan enters the picture in the first few feet of film. And it stays in the picture. At the present time it is dominating the picture.

In London a bunch of capitalist politicians from the various dependencies, dominated by the two leading capitalist politicians of England—Lloyd George and Churchill—are wrangling over the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty. At least the wrangling now appears to have concluded. Hughes having "controlled," "swayed," etc, etc, (according to the cables; the real position is that Lloyd George—ininitely the cleverer man—is using Hughes and working through him) the conference in favor of renewal.

Hughes knows that war between England and Japan on the one hand and America on the other is inevitable.

Even before he left for London he blurted out the truth when he said:—

"Some of these gentlemen who say we would not fight with Asiatics against America are the very men who, when the war broke out, would not fight at all."

For economic reasons England made and must keep the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The coming conflict will probably open between Japan and America.

However, that it will open is certain. While the diplomats are kissing one another on the brow, crude persons are blurting out the truth.

There was Rear-Admiral Huz, for instance. Huz is commandant of the New York Navy Yard, and, in the course of a speech at Cincinnati (cabled to the Australian dailies on February 23), he said:

"If the United States stops building battleships it will be because some other nation has no money to build and wants to quit. I know some of you will catch your breath when I say we must have a navy large enough to fight England. We can construct different ships against Japan from those we construct against England."

As we fit the last slip into the typewriter, we hear the triumphant that-smashes-your-argument remark: War between the English-speaking races is impossible and unthinkable, for "blood is thicker than water!" We merely smile a Marxist smile and humbly point out—

- (a) that English-speaking America has in the past taken up arms against England;
- (b) that the bloodiest war of the last century was between persons with ties closer even than language—the American Civil War; and
- (c) that no blood is so thick that Capitalism will not shed it in lakes and wade through it neck deep; that no relationship is so near that Capitalism will not sunder it on the instant when economic necessity exerts pressure.

Lord Grey of Falloen knows. He said: "To say that a thing is unthinkable, says nothing. Those who know, know that this (war between England and America) could happen."

In only two countries in the world are people not war-weary—in America and Japan. And so the clash will almost certainly open between them.

What of Australia? England wants Australia's held in food and other supplies, and in men if possible.

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