

WESTERN CLARION

A Journal of
CURRENT
EVENTS

Official Organ of
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

HISTORY
ECONOMICS
PHILOSOPHY

866

Twice a Month

VANCOUVER, B. C., MAY 1, 1922

FIVE CENTS

The Genoa Conference

By ROBERT KIRK

OF late days, the symbolical figure of France has been completely metamorphosed—comparing the picture, by British artists, of this erstwhile dame during war-time with the one of yesterday. In the former was seen the pitiful sight of a rather comely young woman, slenderly symmetrical, nailed to a cross, her bosom stained and torn by hunnish hands. While in the background we caught a glimpse of the misery, devastation, and wanton waste of war. But in this latest picture, France appears as the Jew of Europe, stoutly defending the tenets of Shylock. Here the spectator is obliged to fill in such details as the artists failed to put in: the unrelieved famine conditions of Russia; the social cess-pool of Austria; the strenuous labors of German workers to produce the goods for reparation claims: the terrors of peace.

The imagery of British artists has been affected by the painful experiences of their masters during the twelve previous conferences which have taken place since January, 1919. New political alignments in Europe have affected the economic interests of their masters, so causing these propagandists to adjust their ideas to suit new conditions. Each conference, from the fateful one at Versailles to this gathering of brawlers at Genoa was heralded with the wildest acclamations. Fulsome penegyrics, written by the grovelling sycophants of Grub Street, were paid to French and British delegations attending these conventions. And that bovine animal, the public, blissfully content with its pasture, received assurance from the press that everlasting peace had been established, and reconstruction would start on the morrow.

But the conclusion of these discussions proved that the problems, supposed to be solved, were further complicated and their solution impossible. By the fact that each nation is only concerned with the conservation and expansion of its own material interests, failing to submerge these in the interests of their class as a whole. Never once did they consider the social nature of production, its international character or the dependency of any single part upon the whole: that an injury to any single part is an injury to all.

In support of this statement of facts I have taken the following quotation from Dr. E. J. Dillon, writing in the "Fortnightly Review" (New York), March, 1922:

"The special pleaders on the French side do not perceive, that material well-being of the British people is wholly dependent on its foreign trade, which the operation of the Peace Treaties has cut down to a minimum and that the tax-paying capacities of the nation are strained to the utmost limits of endurance. What they do notice is the unenviable plight in which their own attitude has placed them in the world, and the necessity of making some sacrifices—the smaller the better—for the purpose of recovering their prestige and taking up the threads of their policy anew.

"This policy consists in throwing a military network over most of the European continent, in the meshes of which Germany is held fast, and compelling allies, friends and enemies to pay for its up-keep.

"This scheme for political and military hegemony is perhaps the most comprehensive ever devised in modern times. Among the achievements already to its credit is the creation of a great Poland which, congruously with the last military Bill presented to the Legislature in Warsaw, is to have universal conscription (the Government of

Poland won out at the last election, 1921, on a program against conscription—R. K.) and a standing army of a quarter of a million soldiers at the beck and call of France, with an outlay of one hundred and fifty milliard marks a year.

"The Little Entente, too, which bids fair to become a new Austria with Czecho-Slovakia as its centre is another offshoot of the vast military system which has sprung from the war against wars. Czecho-Slovakia is now linked with Poland by a politico-commercial treaty, by which the former State promises its neutrality should the latter have to fight for the possession of Eastern Galicia. France and Poland are also partners in vast economic enterprises as well as military allies, and they are making arrangements for the exploitation of Upper Silesia, for which France is supplying the needed milliards.

"Next in importance comes the Northern Entente comprehending Finland, Poland, Esthonia, submerging Lithuania. The Aland Islands have been presented to Finland as a pledge of friendship. France needs a foothold on the Baltic as much as she requires Tangiers in Morocco and Clapperton Island on the Pacific, to which Mexico lays claim.

"In this masterly way most of the continental peoples are become pawns in the hands of a political chess-player, and Europe is being thrust back again into the maze of tortuous diplomacy and governmental wars."

Here we have laid bare the baleful, vicious nature of Peace as expressed under capitalism! Even five centuries of industrial development, of arts and pretentious culture, ethics and religion, exercise no other influence on its character than to help hide its plundering proclivities, as the feline tribe cover their ash in a thin layer of dust. The ego of this thing stands clear in all its intrigues and artifices for the conquering of power, political and economic, which it weilds as parsimoniously as unsocially.

As soon as the Genoa Conference had entered the primary stage of discussion, the antagonism between France and Britain was made plainly observable. The British State is compelled to find a market for German goods if the reparation claims of the British capitalists are to be paid. Here, certainly, is one country which the Nemesis stalking capitalism has made the disposal of its loot the most difficult thing imaginable. For the reader must remember that they enter (as some must) the British market as German goods, of necessity, are produced as cheaply as possible—the outside marginal point. When imports, they immediately affect industries engaged in the production of goods for the home market. British manufacturers are compelled to cut their prices in order to compete against these goods from Germany. Still more ludicrous, when they are shipped as exports they cripple the export trade of the country. And against their entrance into the United States market, Washington has passed an Anti-Dumping Bill, in 1921.

France on the other side, experiences no difficulty as yet in disposing of these goods as capital among her numerous vassals.

At last, when the only market that can not interfere with British trade and profits is in sight—Russia—the French engage in a heated controversy over the German-Russian trade alliance, demanding the annulment of this treaty and the ejection from the conference of the signatories. Forgetting that in April, 1921, they, too, were secretly conferring with representatives of Moscow for the same pact (or a still worse one for Russia).

"We are told that from April 1, when the Trade Bureau for Russian Countries was founded in Paris until the closing days of December (1921) pourparlers were carried on in Warsaw and elsewhere, at first between officials of the French Ministry of Commerce, and subsequently between the latter and members of the French Red Cross, with a view to striking up a complete agreement between the two Governments which would give France special advantages and put Germany through another mill—this time one of Franco-Russian contrivance. In consequence of the Brussels conference, for instance, the Soviet representatives signified their willingness to recognize Russia's pre-war debts and shortly afterwards this recognition was confirmed by the Moscow Government. Finally the negotiations took a more precise form and came to a head on the following basis: (1) Recognition of the Treaty of Versailles by the Soviet Government. (2) Recognition of the Soviet Government by France. (3) Repayment of Russia's pre-war debts to France by the process of transferring to her Russia's indemnity claim against Germany, congruously with Article 116 of the Treaty of Versailles (which runs as follows: 'The Allied and Associated Powers formally reserve the right of Russia to obtain from Germany restitution and reparations based on the Principles of the present Treaty'). (4) France to receive 40% of Germany's net profits on all her enterprises in Russia. (5) The creation of a French commission to supervise German enterprises in Russia. (6) A platina concession to be given France in the Ural.

"What these conditions portend for Germany, who seems willing to pay to the full extent of her capacity, it would be superfluous to point out in detail. Among other consequences, they would impose on her a fresh financial burden, reduce her citizens working in Russia to the level of serfs, and utterly defeat the central object of the Genoa Conference. But even if they be abandoned, it is urged, what of the spirit which prompted them and also conceived the attempt to found a federation of South Russian Republics under the protectorate of France in June, 1921?"

Full of duplicity and as merciless to the beaten and weak as nature, the intriguing character of capitalism is here unfolded. How then can peace be established; how reconcile the contradictions which arise out of such a system; how smooth the antagonisms engendered by competition? By their own actions the ruling class of society today are destroying every prop on which civilization rests; and though society is far from being conscious of the fact, the entire fabric is due to fall soon. Then, out of the ruins what; and who the builders? Ignorance destroyed this as in the past; will knowledge consciously design the new?

Manitoba Provincial Election, 1922

Local (Winnipeg) No. 109, S. P. of C. has nominated Comrades George Armstrong and Sidney J. Rose as candidates. Contributions are needed to meet deposit (Provincial Govt.) fees. These may be sent to the secretary of Winnipeg Local:--

PETER L. DAVIDSON,

P. O. BOX 2354,

WINNIPEG, MAN.