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Petroleum and Coal in France

FOR France the petroleum question is and remains an industrial and political problem of great importance. In 1921 France consumed 778,000 tons of petroleum; of this 708,000 tons were imported, and only 70,000 were produced at home. This is a disagreeable position, and one that may become critical within a short time. How to satisfy such extensive requirements and to remove the almost complete dependence on foreign countries, is the economic task which may dominate the manoeuvres of the diplomatists in the near future, which may cement alliances and bring about international conflicts.

The Franco-Polish petroleum agreement, concluded after lengthy and difficult negotiations, signifies an important success for French capitalists, who have been long endeavoring to secure the maximum of independence and security for their sources of fuel supply. This agreement gives the French companies, which have received concessions from both governments, certain privileges for a period of 10 years, during which time they enjoy perfect liberty to supply themselves with the necessary material, to transport their products, to export them, and to develop industrially. At the same time they are favored by considerable taxation exemptions from export duties, capital levies, and compulsory loans. The "Moniteur des Interets Materiels," of March 26, expresses itself very clearly on the new situation created by the Franco-Polish agreement: "This treaty enables the French government to attain the three objects it was aiming at: to secure the future of the French companies, to obtain an important share of Polish petroleum, and to exercise control over the French company in Poland." Before the war three groups of French financiers were interested to the extent of a total of 154 million

francs in the exploitation of Polish petroleum. After the war the French capitalists appropriated the German and Austrian concessions, so that by 1920 the amount of French capital invested in the Polish petroleum industry had already reached a sum of 500 millions. The total capital of the companies controlled by French share-holders amounts to 900 millions.

But French policy is not only interested in appropriating foreign petroleum wells, but also in utilizing the so-called national possibilities of fuel production. But the constant efforts made to generate carbon by the aid of alcohol cannot solve the problem of the liquid fuel supply. Experts are devoting increasing attention to the manufacture of liquid carburated hydrogen by means of suitable chemical treatment of coal, asphalt, and lignite. Experiments, made by Metivier showed that the distillation of 20 million tons of coal would yield 85 tons of benzene, 230,000 tons of heavy oils, and 446,000 tons of pitch, paraffine, and tar. As France's yearly consumption of petroleum will soon reach one million tons, it would thus be necessary to distill more than 20 million tons of coal, and in the second place, the metal industry would have to be developed so that the enormous quantities of coke produced in this process could be used up. But where is this immense quantity of coal to be obtained, a quantity representing more than two-thirds of the total production of the French and Saar mines? The asphalt beds in France are but meagre; the production of asphalt does not amount to more than 120,000 tons annually; on the other hand, there is lignite almost everywhere, especially in mountainous districts. These undeniably rich stores have scarcely been exploited as yet, and could be made to yield large amounts of fuel, es-

pecially as the production of benzene and heavy oils by the distillation of lignite at low temperatures has made great advances of late. But despite this, the future lies neither in the generation of "national carbon" nor in the distillation of lignite, but in the utilization of a store of coal large enough to cover the shortage of petroleum.

It is still too early to estimate the result of the chemical process discovered by Metivier, Sabatier, Maille, Ipatief, and Bergius. In the opinion of Professor Connerad this process may solve the problem of liquid fuel for Europe. The coal beds of Central Europe would then to a great extent replace the oil-fields of America. Such a change as this would give France a leading position, with regard to coal and petroleum, equal to that which she will possess with regard to iron and steel should she succeed in keeping her hold on the collieries of the Saar and Ruhr.

The scientific solution of the petroleum problem will be one of the great events of our generation, and will cause a complete industrial and political revolution in the world. The dominance of the great petroleum trusts will cease to be, and the struggle for the possession of the coal-fields will become more acute. The victorious return of Coal, to replace Petroleum which had already dethroned it, will rob the great Anglo-Saxon empires, now lords of fuel and ocean traffic, of their predominance. France, on the other hand, will gain all the possibilities of industrial and commercial expansion implied by ascendancy in the fuel question. It is thus easily comprehensible that the Ruhr area has become an even more valuable spoil than the oil-fields of Mosul and Mexico, and is the stake for which hostile imperialisms are prepared to embroil nations in the most frightful butcheries.—"Inprecorr"

Inevitable Change

DAVID Lloyd George now sees the handwriting on the wall and issues a warning to the British public. Thousands of the well-to-do people, he says, have considered the Socialist doctrine crazy and impossible, but now that the I. L. P. land programme is presented to the British House of Commons it must be taken more seriously. The Socialist agitator has had a long and painful path to travel and his method of administering the drastic dose to arouse the workers from their apathy has never been to the liking of the resentful. The more advanced types of units of past forms of society have suffered for their pains in striving to benefit mankind and in many cases with their life. Karl Marx, the founder of Socialism based his conclusions on the rock of observation and sound reasoning, and even today broadminded men recognize him, although sometimes with reluctance. Every stage in the development of the capitalist system from the time that the handiworkman's tools were thrust into the arms of a big machine requiring great mechanical motive power to operate them; the bringing together of larger numbers of workers un-

der one roof, widening the division of labor, producing greater economy and cheapening commodities; trusts and big combines, eliminating small concerns and driving their operators into the ranks of the wage workers, have come just as outlined by Marx in 1848.

Lloyd George says that the larger portion of the British voting public have no property to seize, and is quite alarmed at the huge industrial population over the agricultural. Only 10 per cent of the British workers are engaged in cultivating the soil. The inculcation of the Socialist germ developed very rapidly in the minds of men and women engaged in factories, and workshop. The storm that now hovers over England may develop into a hurricane and unless something is done to avert the calamity Capitalism is doomed. Again, to use Lloyd George's words, "the greater the resistance the greater the rebound." This has been propounded by Socialists that to stem the tide of human progress could only end in disaster. The Feudal Lords blindly resisted the march of the rising capitalist, and even the Capitalists themselves were ignorant of the law that all

mankind must obey. Economic law in human society is a dynamic agent that explains the active lever of social change. A knowledge of this force provides the workers with the weapon that neither Lloyd George nor any scheme formulated can avert working class control of the means of production and distribution. A warning to the capitalist world only means a message to resist, and the greater the resistance the fiercer the hurricane. Capitalism came into the world dripping from head to foot with blood and dirt and it may be the blind resistance that will clothe it with the same garment in which it was born.

Lloyd George speaks of the shrewdness of the Socialists in the winning of the ex-service men's support by bringing their grievances before the House of Commons, knowing well the cause of the overthrow of their Italian brethren. Karl Marx says no new order can appear until conditions have developed within the womb of the old order. There was room within the womb of Italy for the Fascisti, but now that the elements composing Fascism are becom-

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