

Economic Causes of the War

SOcialists have always maintained that war was an effect of economic forces. As this is a general statement made by Socialists, I think the present time is ripe to substantiate it. This I will endeavor to do from a study of numerous books, written on the war from the capitalist's viewpoint, also other books on colonization.

Dr. Harris's book, "Intervention and Colonization of Africa," tells us (1914): "The rise of capitalist industry in the last 30 or 40 years has destroyed and rebuilt the old worn out towns of the old world, and awakened democracy, while on the other hand, largely as a result of these economic forces, European society has spread throughout the world. This expansion has come about by the way of enterprise of adventurous traders pushing their wares and gathering in the rich natural treasures of savage lands. This transformation is mainly responsible for those policies of imperial expansion, of commercial and colonial rivalries which underlie the past war."

The partition of Africa and Asia furnish us data for a survey of the economic and political forces of today. European states at first directed their efforts towards the acquisition of territory and the founding of colonial empires, in order to secure commercial power and the control of trade routes and centres. Their viewpoint has changed and has become economic and commercial instead of territorial. This was due to, the development of machinery in production and improved transportation facilities enabling in 20 years time that 600 men could do the work formerly done by 2,145 men. This industrial revolution brought what is called over-production, a production that exceeded the purchasing power of the workers. (The historian says exceeded the needs of the people). The facilities and improved means of transportation brought foreign markets which hitherto had been unapproachable.

In 1800 the trade of Europe reached 300 million people; by 1900 over 1,000 million were reached. The home population increased enormously, then we had in the eighties emigration of the workers of Europe to America and the various colonies of European countries. The home governments were anxious to keep this moving population under their own flag and control and became envious for colonial expansion. They began to ask themselves how this expansion could be accomplished, and found it was by means of the sword. Lord Roberts tells us in his Message to the Nation, when speaking of German ambitions: "Britain obtained her's, sword in hand." Read also Homer Lea's "The day of the Saxon," p. 12, and to those Henry Dubbs who are carried away with the League of Nations movement, I commend "The Day of the Saxon," p. 23, where Lea says: "There can be no retention of the British sovereignty without the repression of the territorial expansion of other nations, a condition that **must culminate in a war,—one war if the empire is destroyed,—a series if it is victorious.**"

Russia undertook a remarkable colonial expansion in Central Asia to secure trade and trade centres. Japan fought a great war to fulfil her economic destiny in Korea and on the Chinese mainland. When Japan whipped China in 1895 she proceeded to annex Chinese territory for Japanese capitalists until German, French and Russian capitalists said "hands off." Britain stood apart in splendid isolation and gave the Jap to understand that she was her friend: the result was the Jap-Anglo Alliance. The British capitalists secured a commanding position in the East. The Germans meanwhile seized Kiaochow after they discovered the district was rich in minerals.... This is the part the Japs have captured during the past war. The dark continent of Africa is the part in which we find colonial expansion and where the various commercial interests of Europe clash. In 1870. European possession of Africa was confined to seaport towns and adjacent territory, which were used as ports of call and trading centres. The European interest in the Dark Continent as a field of commercial and industrial activity was aroused as never before. The number of explorers of the time had outlined at least the location of the great lakes

and waterways, and the possibilities of the various sections as sources of wealth and trade for Europeans was ascertained with a fair degree of accuracy.

The founding of the Belgian Congo by King Leopold II, of Belgium forming the "International Exploration and Civilization of Central Africa," was a start. It was soon noted that this region was rich in ivory and rubber, and various sections were parcelled out to trading companies. France became ambitious over this territory, but Belgium received the support of the other European powers to own it. We all know about the atrocities in this part of Africa, and it is time well spent to read E. D. Morel's two books: "King Leopold II. and the Congo," and "Britain in Congo."

The reason we saw so little fighting over the dividing up of Africa was because the powers partitioned it off from time to time with their coalitions, one time Germany and Britain opposing France, other times France and Germany opposing Britain, also France and Britain against Germany, according to the economic interests of the parties concerned.

Previous to 1870 Britain did not intend any more expansion, but the discovery of gold, 1869 and 1871, in South Africa, gave her a change of heart. The discovery of gold and diamonds brought in white settlers and Britain obtained possession of the chief diamond mines, the ownership of which was disputed by the Transvaal authorities. Then we have a beginning of the economic rivalries of European nations over colonial expansion, in an endeavor to obtain territory for emigration, also a monopoly market for the disposal of the surplus wealth of home labor, and also the exploitation of native labor and natural resources of the controlled territory.

Roland G. Usher, in "Pan-Germanism," 1913, says "the population of Germany has increased so rapidly and increase in industry has grown at a stupendous rate and is enormously in excess of the needs of the population; her prosperity will mean bankruptcy unless some outlet is found for her surplus production and an extensive market found for this surplus production. Germany to use the channel, forces her to expose her commerce to the assaults of the English fleet so long as the latter control the Channel. Even if she acquires colonies and a great market she cannot really possess them until she acquires a highway safe from the attacks of her enemies. Short of conquering France and England, she can never free her commerce from actual danger without a great fleet in the North Sea. To secure a world trade in some fashion which will not expose her to attacks from the English fleet an overland route to the East must be found. Pan-Germanism is therefore, in the first place a defensive movement for self-preservation. In the second place an offensive movement, directed against France and Britain its object is to capture English possessions in the Mediterranean and Asia. She expects thus to obtain an outlet for her surplus population and manufactures." (Pan-Germanism. R. G. Usher, 1913.) —The Copp Clark Co., Ltd., Toronto.

The "Daily Chronicle War Book" deals with this surplus manufacture and population and the scramble of European powers for opportunities of exploiting undeveloped estates, also the need of raw material and foodstuff for home market, and says: "Statesmen have had brought home to them the supreme urgency of the economic necessities to the modern state. The modern statesman has to think in terms of commerce, about raw material for his country's products, and markets for the manufactured goods. The security of overseas trade depends on a strong navy. Hence the appetite of colonies and trade goes hand in hand with naval ambitions. Britain with her colonies and naval traditions was able with ease to adjust herself to the new world policy. Germany on the other hand with a bad geographical position and the absence of coaling stations, was in a highly disadvantageous position. Therein is to be sought one of the root causes of the recurring antagonisms that have marked Anglo-German relations in the past 15 years."

Dr. Rose, "Origin of War," p. 75, says: "Germany coming last in the field of world policy could not ac-

quire a coaling station without alarming everybody."

"Daily Chronicle War Book," p. 10: "Germany had been left out in the cold, at a time when the new pressure of economic conditions, over sea possessions is more valuable than ever to a nation."

"Pan-Germanism," p. 49: "Belgium, Holland, whose existence Germany's rivals regard as necessary to their own safety," and the "Times," London, 8th March, 1917, says: "There are still, it seems, some Englishmen who greatly err as to the reasons that have forced England to draw the sword. They do not reflect our honor, and our interest compelled us to join France and Russia even although Germany had scrupulously respected the rights of small nations. We felt in honor bound to keep the word we had given, in keeping it self-interest had gone hand in hand with honor. They were not reasons of sentiment, they were self regarding and even selfish reasons." A. G. Gardiner in the "Daily News," "The riches of the Lorraine iron mines are the real heart of the war controversy."

So widely do the economic interests ramify, so completely are all the sections of the globe influenced by them, that the Boer War, Morocco, the strangling of Persia, the war in Tripoli, the Balkan crisis, were only incidents in the gigantic struggle in which the very pawns are kingdoms and the control of the globe the stake of the Imperialists. England gained her economic position because of her geographical position and her coal and iron resources. Being an island she was not torn asunder during the Continental wars, and was able to continue her industrial expansion with peace at home. The utilization by her rivals of all modern inventions has robbed her of this unique economic position she held in 1815.

Turkey, in the 70's, was a tool England used not so much to obey England's behests as to frustrate Russia's expansion. The Turkish-Russian war proves that. This aspiration of Russia for a trade route to the Mediterranean made the German and Austrian alliance, who desired this expansion for their trade in the East. When Germany attempted to colonize in Venezuela she was ousted by U. S. A. and England. Germany could not obtain access to such a colony in the Mexican Gulf while England and U. S. A. controlled the Atlantic Ocean, without their permission.

In "Pan-Germanism," p. 139-140, R. G. Usher tells us about an agreement to frustrate German expansion by U. S. A., Britain and France, and in p. 146, says: "At all costs, U. S. A. and Germany must be kept apart. Britain and France withdrew their opposition to U. S. A. ambitions in the Gulf of Mexico and the building of the Panama Canal, because it would be impossible to keep a sizeable fleet in the Gulf of Mexico and also concentrate their fleet in the English Channel. Usher in his chapter on the position of U. S. A. gives us the economic reasons why U. S. A. took Cuba, also the Philippines from Spain, to extend the coalition of France, England and U. S. A. in the Far East, and prevent the acquisition by Germany of colonies whose location or development would interfere with the control of Eastern commerce of these three countries. Usher also tells us if Germany should move on Holland this coalition will take possession of the Dutch colonies, the Celebes, and will then hold a position controlling the trade routes from India to China, Japan, and to Europe in general, which would be nearly impregnable as anything of the kind in the world.

When the question arose of the Allies taking over the Dutch ships early in 1918, the Wall Street Journal did not put up any sentiment about it and said: "It may sound cold blooded, but there is sound reason for believing that if Holland does not like the use to which the Allies put her ships and concludes therefor to enter the war, the Allies would much prefer she enter on the side of Germany . . . and there are reasons why Great Britain would be content to see Holland jump out of the frying pan into the fire. The entry of Holland would make Great Britain a present of Java, the whole Island of Borneo, and among other conquests, Britain would add to the greater part of her African possessions,

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