

Economic Causes of War

Article No. 15.

(Continued from last issue).

THIS steel and iron age of capitalism is not confined to railways; it is also very much interested in armaments. French and German ambassadors at Constantinople engaged in incessant conflict over the right to serve Turkey with armaments, from the forges of Creusot in France or Essen in Germany. The banks take their share in this competition and the procedure is to offer a loan, on the condition that the proceeds be expended to purchase guns from either side as the case may be. A British firm built the forts at Dardanelles in 1914. Austria has been known to make it a condition of a tariff treaty with Serbia, that she should buy her guns from the Austrian works at Skoda. Britain's treaty in defence of Spanish interests in Morocco resulted in the rebuilding of the Spanish navy by British firms. When a loan and railway concession in 1909 went to Germany, the British Ambassador objected and China was going to the dogs, but when Lever and Company combined to found a vast soap factory in China it was good business.

It was the great steel interests of the United States that dictated her entrance into the Great War. The exports of the States, which in 1913 were 2,466 billions, increased to 5,481 billions in 1916, the largest share of which went to the war industries. Out of the sudden falling off of their exports through the submarine warfare arose the demand for the freedom of the seas, or in other words a market for their products.

So we find that government today is in reality the executive committee of the trusts and affiliated banks who use diplomacy and armaments if not actually to annex semi-civilized countries, at least to secure markets, excluding competition from the building of railways and the exploiting of mines in their self-allotted spheres of interests. The Great War has ended with the Imperialist strengthened in the saddle of governments. The recent merging of the Canadian steel, iron and coal industries in the British Empire Steel Corporation is an inevitable outcome of the intensive development of the iron stage of capitalism. Imperialism aims at the autocratic control of all the small nations to exploit them for its own benefit. Production of profits merely considers wants that can be paid for, and the worker only gets a small share or slave's portion of the wealth he produces. The Socialist wants to socialize the means of production and produce for use, eliminating the exploitation of one by another.

While the contradictions in the capitalist system have become greater, such as production, which is a social act, yet the appropriation of the wealth is undertaken by the capitalist class because of their ownership of the means of production. Capitalism has severed the worker from the tools and made him a wage slave. There exists, as Engels points out, a: "Contradiction between socialized organization in the individual factory and social anarchy as a whole." Through the perfecting of machinery being made compulsory for each manufacturer by competition there arises the great industrial reserve army, the great contradiction of want in the midst of plenty. Excess of the means of subsistence on the one hand and on the other, excess of workers without the means of subsistence. As soon as a capitalist country is over-stocked with wealth, poverty stalks abroad. The most remarkable contradiction under capitalism is the fact that while the exploitation of the worker becomes greater the rate of profit has a tendency to sink. As Marx points out, profit is mystified surplus value because profit is the percentage calculated on the total capital invested. We are told to save for the dull times, but if all the people of Canada were to save a dollar a head per week they would hasten the industrial crisis by leaving between seven and eight million dollars worth of products on the market. Some say invest that money, but how can that be done when

the demand for commodities has been cut down already? Capitalists recognize the social character of production which forced on them the joint stock companies and later the trusts with their concentration of wealth, making the capitalist class superfluous as all their social functions are being performed by salaried employees.

It is this overproduction that brings on a struggle for foreign markets. Listen to a capitalist view. Hon. Leslie M. Shaw, while secretary of the United States Treasury under President Roosevelt, delivered a lecture to the students and faculty of Chicago University, March 1st, 1907, just previous to the financial panic of that year. He was speaking to a critical audience and knew his speech would be given a wide circulation. He said: "The time is coming when the manufactories will outgrow the country, and men by the hundred of thousands will be turned out of the factory. The factories are multiplying faster than our trade, and we will shortly have a surplus, with no one abroad to buy and no one at home to absorb it because the laborer has not been paid enough to buy back what he has created. The last century was the worst in the world's history for wars. I look to see this century bring out the greatest conflict ever waged in the world. It will be a war for markets and all the nations of the world will be in the fight as they are all after the same markets to dispose of the surplus of their factories." Why this surplus? It is, as Mr. Shaw says, because the laborer has not been paid enough to buy back what he has produced. Then the workers are used as pawns in the fight and die for their country to obtain a market to dispose of the surplus wealth they themselves produced and that Shaw tells us we cannot buy back because we are not paid enough. The worker is recompensed for his services in the war with miserable pensions, street organs, and kicks.

Socialism is nothing but a reflex in thought of the conflicts in fact which exist under capitalism. The fact exists outside of us, independent of the will or actions of even the capitalists who have brought it on. These conflicts are the contradictions I have mentioned and are the cause of the antagonisms between what are called Capital and Labor. Some people would have us believe that war is an economic necessity. In its origin when primitive tribes spread over the earth in search of pastures new, because of famine or inadequate fertility of the soil, war may be termed an economic necessity, but today, while it may be an economic necessity for the capitalist class, to the Socialist it results from the instability of capitalism. The breakdown of the capitalist system, leading to the social revolution, is being brought about by the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system of production itself.

Meanwhile the discontent of the workers is growing, and the sense of the injustice of the present social system has developed a new code of ethics. Having no property of their own, and the means of wealth production being owned by companies and corporations, having no body to be kicked or soul to be damned, the workers fail to see the need of private property in production and shout for government ownership and control. But we must point out to the worker that that is not the remedy. Andrew Carnegie advocated Government ownership of railways, and if the capitalists sell out to the government and hold bonds, their unearned wealth would flow smoother than today because the government would use the military to squash labor with a still firmer hand.

Then again, a new phase has arisen which E. D. Morel in a speech in England has pointed out, and which we as workers cannot ignore, as a result of the Great War; that is that black troops are being used by France in the occupied territory of Germany. These troops, converted into machines of slaughter to save the world for democracy and for the glory of God, have brought about terrible conditions amongst the womenfolk of the occupied ter-

ritory. France is militarizing her African colonies to such an extent that by 1922 she will have 200,000 African, mostly negroes, without counting the conscripts of French North Africa—Algeria, Tunis and Morocco. Two of the three years of their training is to be spent in France. There is no use in disguising the fact, these troops will be used in France, and Jean Longuet realizes that in a letter he wrote E. D. Morel. This policy of France will be forced upon Great Britain if she hopes to possess her share of Africa, which has only a force of 2,000 police to keep internal order with and which is next door to the French territory that is being militarized. If the policy of using these black troops in France to keep the workers down is carried out, don't forget they will be used elsewhere.

To talk of peace through such a medium as the League of Nations, or any other method under capitalism, is preposterous. We, as Socialists, must carry on the class war by educating the worker to the fallacy of the Imperialists' policy of pitting the workers of one country against those of another. The class war is not against the individual, but against the social system and the social position of the economically dominant class; not a fight to supplant the capitalist class but to abolish them. It is not a fight against an inferior class, because when the class struggle is understood a historic mission is ascribed to every class. The historic mission of the capitalist class has been accomplished and the class itself has outlived its usefulness, becoming parasitical consumers of the wealth produced. As the capitalist class represented a higher plane of civilization than the Feudal lords it does not mean that the Feudal system was of less importance in the general development of human progress. Engels is very clear on this development in his "Landmarks of Scientific Socialism," in which he says: "We must not forget that our entire economic, political and intellectual development has its foundation in a state of society in which slavery was regarded universally as necessary. In this sense we may say that without ancient slavery there would have been no modern socialism. It is very easy to make preachments about slavery and to express our moral indignation at such a scandalous institution. Unfortunately the whole significance of this is, that it merely says that those old institutions do not correspond with our present conditions and sentiments engendered by these conditions. . . . And when we enter this matter we are obliged to say in spite of all contradictions and accusations of heresy, that the introduction of slavery under the conditions of that time was a great step forward."

All previous class struggles have been waged in the interest of a minority class with the help of the workers. Today the class which represents social progress are the workers, which embraces all that is essential in the industrial process, and which, being in the overwhelming majority, has not to depend on another class like all previous classes. It is the duty of the Socialist to make the facts of history known to his fellow workers. This I have endeavored to do in these articles. Let us point out to our fellow workers that in capitalist society living labor is but the means to increase accumulated labor, or capital, for the owners. Socialism means accumulated labor is but a means to widen, enrich and promote the existence of the laborer. The mechanical development of the productive forces of today requires production on a large scale, and if we are to eliminate wars, waged to obtain markets for the surplus wealth the workers produce, we must realize that our position in society is to transform the private ownership of the means of production and distribution (which is used co-operatively by the workers today producing socially the means of subsistence for the profit of a few) into social ownership, producing for use instead of for profit. The function of the Socialist Party of Canada is to educate the workers to this end.

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[THE END.]