

MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

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to the Spanish colonies. The Catalan people of North-west Spain, who stood by England and her allies, assured that their liberties would be protected, were left to the mercy of Spain and were obliged to submit to Spain after a two years' struggle. An instance of protecting small nations. This slave trade and the opposition of Spain to the smuggling carried on by English vessels in Spanish America, and the desire of England to deprive Spain of her commerce with the Family Compact of King Louis XV. of France and Philip V. of Spain, was the economic forces behind the war of 1739. France was extremely jealous of England's trade and colonies, and urged Spain to gradually take England's trade away from the Spanish colonies. No one knew of the compact at the time (secret diplomacy), but it marked the beginning of the long struggle between England and France as to which should have the chief trade and colonies of the world.

It is never hard to find an excuse for war when it is desired. Spain quarrelled with England over the smuggling of British vessels and the English vessel going more than once a year, as stated under the Treaty of Utrecht. This war merged into the war of the Austrian Succession and the policy of the Balance of Power. England was in no way then concerned about the Austrian question, but it gave her an excuse to renew the war with France and Spain against the commercial growth of these two countries. This also led to the Jacobite rising under Prince Charlie. In 1748 the war ended with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, without any return the historian says except the million dollars worth of treasure which Commodore Anson, who had been sent to plunder the Spaniards, brought back after sailing round the world. It also put an end to the intrigue of the Stuarts and brought an increase of Britain's power on the seas.

When the struggle of England and France died out in one country it cropped up in another, "all over trade." Trouble arose in India between the British East India Company and the French East India Company. The French were defeated by Robert Clive, a young clerk of the company, who had been sent out by his parents because he was too wild to control at home. The year that peace was signed in India war broke out in Canada over a dispute between the fur traders as to who should have the privilege of swindling the Indians. War broke out afresh on the continent, and the French seized the Island of Minorca, S. W. of Spain, before war was declared. Trouble arose again in India over a dispute between an Indian Prince and British traders. The French were victorious everywhere. Chesterfield (afterwards Lord Chatham) exclaimed: "We are no longer a nation."

The army and navy were reorganized under Wm. Pitt and England turned the scales, won Canada at Quebec, and became the ruling power in India under the Treaty of Paris, 1763. This was the period of the Black Hole of Calcutta incident. With the great commercial prosperity, and the need of increased farming and woolgrowing the landed class passed more Enclosure Acts, taking away more and more of the common lands. Between the years 1710-1760, 334,974 acres were enclosed, and from 1760 to 1843, 7,000,000 acres were enclosed. The workers' condition, with all England's prosperity, had fallen so low that in 1495 a man could feed himself with a greater stock of food with 15 weeks' labor on the farm than an artisan was able to obtain for a whole year's labor in 1725.

We have now reached the stage where the worker, being evicted from the land, becomes a proletarian, and we are now entering the industrial revolution which will be our next lesson.

PETER T. LECKIE.

THE SCRAMBLE FOR OIL AMONG THE NATIONS.

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one, and that intervention by the United States would undoubtedly involve trouble with England unless a previous arrangement should assure her of what she might regard as an equitable share of the spoils.

Righteous argument will not cause either side to give way. How little impression it makes may be inferred from a passage in the speech of Sir Charles Greenway, Bt., chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, Ltd., to its last annual meeting. Speaking of the controversy with the United States, Sir Charles said: "I would like to refer to the pathetic account which was given recently in the press of the enormous sacrifices which the United States had made in depleting itself—not without valuable consideration, be it remembered—of its reserves of oil for the benefit of the rest of the world. This was made the basis for claiming that American producers are entitled to their share in future oilfields outside of America as well as the enormous ones in the United States and elsewhere which they already hold. I am now wondering when we shall see similar demands put forward by the Bolsheviks in regard to the oil supplied to other countries from Baku during the last 30 or 40 years and from the gold producers in South Africa and even from our own colliery proprietors for the gold and coal of which they have depleted themselves—for the welfare of the rest of the world!" (Laughter).

If there were a real League of Peace, its first business would be to internationalize the oil supply, conserve it for the most vital uses like lubrication and shipping, drastically limit its consumption in pleasure cars, and ration it among the peoples of the world according to need. There being no possibility of such a league while the Anglo-Persian and Standard Oil Companies continue to exist, no such intelligent policy can be pursued. Of course, the parties at interest may arrange things temporarily by dividing the field. But there is danger of something else. If you have a navy, you must have oil. If you have oil, you must have a bigger navy, than that of someone else who has the oil, so that he cannot refuse it to you. If you have a navy with lots of oil to protect, you must have a bigger navy than someone else who has a navy without oil, so that he cannot deprive your navy of oil the moment war breaks out. And then, if you haven't enough oil, you must exert pressure through finance and commerce and shipping, and if you have more than enough oil, you must keep ownership of the oil so that you can sell it and so meet the pressure of competing finance and commerce and shipping. So it goes while one piece after another is brought into play on the great chess board, and someone may rashly precipitate action by taking a pawn.

The problem of oil is, to be sure, only a minor one in the course of the centuries; before many years are gone petroleum may be entirely exhausted, or may be superseded by some other source of power such as alcohol. Nevertheless, it constitutes a present danger to the peace of the world, and we might possibly witness the grotesque comedy of the human race endangering its very existence in a quarrel for possession of a fuel which has not been in use more than sixty years and may not be used sixty years from now. The trouble over oil is a perfect symbol of the trouble with the whole present organization of human relationships.

GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY.

Upper Silesia.

AS in the case of Alsace-Lorraine, on Germany's western frontier, it is modern economic development which has given to Silesia on her eastern border, an immense importance. "There are few places in the world," declares Sidney Osborne in "The Upper Silesian Question and Germany's Coal Problem" (Allen & Unwin, 12s. 6d.)* "Where we find so many of the earth's treasures in one and the same spot and where at the same time the strata are so easily worked as in Upper Silesia. Its coalbeds are among the largest in the world. At the present time its coal production amounts to a

fourth** of the production of Germany. It is two and a half times as large as the former production of Austria-Hungary and double that of Russia and Belgium. With the exception of England, America and the Rhenish-Westphalian coal district, it is equalled only by France. And it is able to yield a much larger quantity still, for the store of coal in Upper Silesia is greater than in the Rhenish-Westphalian coal district. In all probability it cannot, at the present rate of consumption, be exhausted under one thousand years."

When in the middle of the 18th century Frederick the Great defeated Austria and annexed Silesia to Prussia, he set to work immediately to develop the smelting of iron, with the object of making Prussia independent of Sweden. But it was coal, as Osborne writes, "which in Germany caused changes in regional relations which were practically revolutionary. The coal-mining regions, like those of Upper Silesia, formerly barren and sparsely populated, now became the dynamic centres of society." (It was this economic development, in fact, which gave the deathblow, in Germany as in the United States, to political separatism; since "it produced in each country a regional specialization and a regional interdependence"—"division of labor" as between the various districts making up the nation.)

Coal made Silesia a very vital portion of the new German industrial-military Empire; as iron-ore made Lorraine another vital portion. And accordingly both provinces became objects of covetous interest to Germany's neighbors. When, after the Russian Revolution of 1917, the emergence of an independent Poland—dependent of the Tsar, that is, though not of Allied capital—was assured, the Poles at once began to formulate Polish claims to Silesia—which had never been Polish since the 14th century. "Why," Osborne asks, "did they never waste the bones of a single Polish lancer for the possession of Upper Silesia during all the centuries when Poland was establishing and consolidating her Empire? The answer is that Poland never had the remotest idea of laying claim to it so long as it was supposed to be a poor and mainly barren country."

It is interesting to note, from the geographer's point of view, that the "natural" connections of Silesia—an inland area—were with Germany. Her outlets were via her main waterway, the river Oder,*** to the North Sea (through Prussia) and via Oder and Elbe to the North Sea. And accordingly the industries of Eastern Germany have been built up on Silesian coal.

The first draft of the Peace Treaty (see Newbigin, "Aftermath," page 32) gave Upper Silesia to Poland. But in the final version its fate was made dependent on a plebiscite, which has just been taken. Propaganda by the rival claimants has already led to fighting in various districts, and Dr. Newbigin opines that "the final settlement is perhaps more likely to be on the basis of some kind of adjustment, than merely on a vote." The Polish champions are able to declare with some plausibility that "in Upper Silesia the Poles are proletarians in revolt against German junkerdom, capitalism, oppression and exploitation." ("Manchester Guardian Weekly," March 4, 1921.) On the other hand, it is significant that French capitalists have been and are busy "penetrating" Upper Silesia; and it is at least open to doubt whether these same Polish leaders would encourage a proletarian revolt against French capitalism and junkerdom. Whatever the immediate destiny of Upper Silesia, it is fairly clear that her proletariat will still have their main struggle in front of them.

J. F. HORRABIN.
—"The Plebs."

*This book is, in effect, German Government propaganda, and tends to spoil a good case by over-stating it. But is a very full and useful book of reference on the subject and contains much material of interest to economic-geographers.
**In 1912, 46,584,468 tons, or 28 per cent. of the output of Prussia. ("Upper Silesia" Foreign Office Handbook, No. 40)
***Note that "Upper Silesia" means "southern" Silesia, i.e. higher up the river.

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