

War In the Pacific--What For?

In Two Parts. Part I.
By ROBERT KIRK

IT IS a fact that the development of armaments synchronizes with industrial expansion in all countries. Had not British pirates combined to sweep from the seas the pirates of Spain a rising merchant class in Britain would never have peacefully penetrated a European market.

Had not the forces of Clive rolled back the forces under India's rulers the treasures of the East would never have been spilled in Britain's lap. Had not America's "teapot" boiled over in Boston harbor American independence would still be in the making.

Had not the "mailed fist" of Frederick and Bismarck welded the separate German States into a homogeneous mass there would have been no German Empire.

Had not France, Great Britain, the United States and Japan woke China from its sleep of centuries by war after war capitalism would never have raised its ugly head in the exotic East.

All discussion, then, upon limitation of armament is futile until bourgeois society learns to co-operate in the exploitation of the earth's resources and divide the spoils in proportion to the amount of labor each country contributes.

But the predatory propensities of bourgeois society, as virile now as in the earliest stages of Barbarism, are opposed to any such scheme and its happy solution.

Besides, being purblind, they are already premeditating war which, very readily, may prove the most sanguinary struggle of the Ages and bring about the very thing they seek to avoid.

If the foremost powers are not contemplating war why are they rushing to completion the greatest aggregation of fighting ships ever assembled on the seas?

If, formerly, Britain's main fleet was to protect her merchant ships in European waters—why has it been transferred to the Pacific with its base at Singapore?

Why has the Australian government suddenly discarded a programme for the building of more naval ships in keeping with its magnitude of export trade for one of dock-building and port improvements on an extensive scale, while preparing plans for the conversion of Port Darwin into a naval base, which would bring Singapore in China within 1,000 miles of Australia?

One might very pertinently enquire the reason for the Japanese Cabinet making unusually large appropriations for the army and navy at a time when the financial stress of all countries is palpably evident (776,000,000 yen out of a total budget of 1,600,000,000).

The insular mind of the press cannot answer these questions and governments fear to do so; therefore, we must undertake the task ourselves.

The "Morning Post," a lusty advocate of the political charlatan, Mr. Lloyd George, tells us in a series of articles, "that there are 10,000,000 of a surplus population in the British Isles."

That is to say, there are nearly 3,000,000 workers, with their dependents, for whom there are no jobs and no visible means in the country—under capitalism—for supplying them with one.

That this is so the British Government further confirms in voting £1,000,000 to assist unemployed workers to overseas colonies and dominions; in appropriations amounting to £40,000,000 for loans to these same bodies, for schemes which will provide work to settlers; in financing propaganda which will attract this surplus to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Unemployment in Great Britain is of no transient character; it grows constantly and becomes more acute with the industrial development of all other countries.

Its chief industries, coal, textiles and shipping are

not only affected by the economic consequences of war in Europe but by the industrial expansion of America, Egypt and India; of China and Japan.

These countries have taken the raw materials needful to the production of cotton goods,—materials which formerly they supplied this department of the textile industry of Great Britain with,—and are producing these goods and sell them in a market formerly dominated by Britain.

Moreover, the United States, enriched by war, enters the wool market of Australia as a rival buyer, adds this stock of raw material to that gathered from their own lands and competes as a woollen producer against Great Britain in a world market.

While cheap as British coal owners can obtain coal it is a physical impossibility for them to compete against Germany, France and Poland and still make profits.

The free tonnage in ships and coal from Germany, the immense quantities of coal from the Briey and Sear Basins, from Alsace and Lorraine enables France to sell coal in a European market cheaper than it can be sold at an English pit-head.

While Poland adds to the congestion with coal and minerals from Upper Silesia. Less industrial than agricultural, she can never consume, as Germany does, this material in a further reproductive stage of industry.

There is also the competition from the United States and Japan for the seaborne trade of the world. Which in turn is affected by the use of oil as fuel.

Oil displaces labor; is more combustible than coal; occupies less space, and enables the big shipping combines to pay their stockholders the average rate of interest, even in these times, by the savings thus affected.

Affected as they are by recent world-wide developments, these three industries, supplying, as they did, the means to an existence for a great majority of British workers, and the chief source of income for a propertied class, are the economic causes of unemployment and the rising tide of emigration in Great Britain.

Knowing that British industry must continue to suffer further restrictions in output, the financial capitalists of the country are seeking fresh fields for exploitation. They are more successful in this respect than are the workers in seeking new fields to be exploited in.

Our Peter T. Leckie quotes the "Sunday Chronicle" as follows:—

"American oil men see the danger ahead;—they are therefore scouring the world for new oil-fields; only to find that British enterprise has nearly everywhere been ahead of them and that the control of almost all the most promising properties is in British hands.

"The past of the oil industry belonged to America; its present is predominantly under her control; but its future, if we play our cards well, should be, and will be, British. America is not going to see her old supremacy in the oil world pass without a struggle; that she will fight hard and long to prevent the British concessions in Mexico, Central and South America from remaining in our hands; and this question of oil is going to prove one of the most contentious that has ever arisen between the two countries."

Besides oil there is Asia to be exploited. And China just breaking through the chrysalis of feudalism to capitalism is the "last great market" to be fought for.

Britain, France, the United States and Japan are all contenders for this market.

"Up to the outbreak of war between China and Japan the interest of the American people in the politics of the Far East had been languid. Now it became keener and it was quickly stimulated by the acquisition of the Philippines and by the independent revival of American trade.

"The United States had never ceased to make large purchases from China, and in 1880 its imports from that country amounted to \$22,000,000, but its exports to her were barely over £1,000,000. In 1890 exports began to catch up with imports, . . . and in 1900 when the imports had risen to \$27,000,000 exports had grown to \$15,250,000. Then in 1902 exports at last exceeded imports.

"This rapid increase in the sale of American goods. . .

made it incumbent on the nation to follow with more attention what was going on in the Far East.

"And above all to determine what course to adopt in reference to the break up of the Chinese Empire, which then seemed imminent. Several of the European powers seemed bent on the partition of China, and when Great Britain and Japan, who were opposed to it, had taken care to mark off a sphere of interest for themselves in order that if the worst should befall, they might not come out empty-handed.

"Unable to prevent and unwilling to take part in a division of this sort, the United States fell back on the principle of the 'open door.' The move was successful" ("United States as a World Power," Coolidge).

With a population of more than 400,000,000 living on an area less than 5,000,000 square miles; possessing a little over 8,000 miles of railroads; with coal, iron, and oil in greater abundance than any other country in the world, China is ripe for exploitation.

But big as China is, much as it lacks in modern civilization, great as its consumption capacity may be it is not large enough to allow for the complete absorption of capital and commodities that are ready for shipment from Britain, America, France and Japan.

It is this fact that accounts for the conflict of interests between the United States and Japan. For the latter country since the war has become a creditor nation with an immense industrial development.

She looks upon China as the source of cheap raw material which will allow her to retain her position among nations and the field which can absorb an ever increasing volume of capital.

To insure this she has developed a Monroe Doctrine, a priority of interest in China particularly and Asia generally. To maintain this policy she has built up an army and navy that is the equal of the United States and compares very favorably, in strength, with that of Great Britain.

While the United States looks on China as the logical market which can consume the ever-increasing surplus of commodities which the markets north and south of them are not big enough to absorb. And to insure successful penetration to this market and the development of China along western lines Haiti has been fortified; Guam is being dredged for a deep anchorage, and then super-dreadnoughts rushed to completion which, with the big fleet already on the seas, will add force to this act of penetration.

Here are two policies which conflict, the "open door" and a priority of interests: here are economic forces which must clash. But why is Britain allied with Japan; France, less obviously, with the United States?

The ruling class of Britain, the financial capitalists and the greater industrial groups, recognize that Great Britain is no longer the "workshop of the world"; dependent upon the rest of the world for nearly 65 per cent. of the foodstuffs consumed in the country, lacking in natural resources of wealth, they feel the physical incapacity of the country to increase its industrial development.

But the profits from its present status of development keep coming in and, further augmented by foreign investments, the British capitalist class must have an extensive field for re-investment of this increasing surplus.

By lending aid to Japan, for the purpose of closing the "open door" in China, a field for British capital to be exploited in is given in return. France, on the other hand, has "property rights" in China, and Japanese imperialism is no guarantee that these 'rights' are perfectly safe.

French capitalists have acquired a strong army and navy, and considerable political power in Europe; all these are for sale to the highest bidder. Who could pay more than the United States?

The activities of France in Europe since the end of the last war (activities which as "Clarion" readers know have affected Britain's European market), the

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