

WESTERN CLARION

A Journal of
CURRENT
EVENTS

Official Organ of
THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

HISTORY
ECONOMICS
PHILOSOPHY

No. 880.

EIGHTEENTH YEAR

Twice a Month

VANCOUVER, B. C., DECEMBER 1, 1922.

FIVE CENTS

The War Documents

"When they invoke against us our Secret Treaty with Russia, we shall invoke our public Treaty with humanity."

(Jean Jaures, at Brussels, July 29, 1914).

THERE has been published already such a mass of material dealing with the events which led up to the world war of 1914-18 that at first glance it would seem superfluous to spend further time and space on the subject. In any consideration that has been given in this journal heretofore, or in the literature of the Socialist Party of Canada generally to the war and its causes, the prevailing note has been that wars between nations arise not in defence of the weak against the strong, not for national honor nor through ideal motives, but to advance the material welfare of one national group of propertied interests as against another, and that the reasons for alliance of resources between groups are marked out in the routes of trade and in projected or actual territorial dominance. (In this connection, if the reader has not already done so he will do well to read Peter T. Leckie's "Economic Causes of War." See Literature Price List, page 8). The soundness of that analysis is well borne out by the facts, and every document that has any bearing on the war and the diplomatic negotiations concerning it fully bears it out. It is with some of these documents we would deal here. There are Clarion readers in outlying districts, no doubt, who are unable to follow the investigations that have been made into the mire of diplomatic correspondence incidental to the war and the general mass of literature connected with it.

In "The Nation" (N. Y.) Oct. 11, 1922 there appeared an article entitled "They all Lied" by Lewis S. Gannett, and in the International Relations section of the same number there appeared some excerpts from various official documents, presented to show that the Entente Powers were not taken by surprise by the war and that they had been for years preparing for it. The "Manchester Guardian" last June carried articles of a similar nature, showing that the plea of an "unprovoked attack" on an unsuspecting France and Belgium as the outcome of a carefully planned German conspiracy was voiced by the British government to conceal the facts of the case, a course which in their judgment was necessary to the success of their war policy. We shall come to that in time. The mass of material is so great as to make it difficult to judge what to select. The work done in this particular field by E. D. Morel (now labor M. P. for Dundee) has received wide acknowledgment. Indeed, several books and many articles have been written based upon his work, and the documents now coming to light well bear out his conclusions. His point of view as to the primary power of international diplomacy in causing war is subject to question, but his point of view does not hinder the usefulness for us of his researches. We shall acknowledge Mr. Morel's help beforehand, therefore, for much of our material in what we have to say.

"The Nation" documents (beforementioned) are largely based on the "De Siebert" documents and on "Un Livre Noir" (A Black Book). Our

readers will remember the text of the secret treaties of the Russian Imperial Archives reproduced from "Pravda" of Nov. 23 (and later) 1917, in the "New York Evening Post" and in the "Manchester Guardian." They have now come to be known as the "First Collection" of the documents of the Russian Imperial Archives. The De Siebert documents are known as the "Second Collection. — Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, 1909-14."—Contains in 762 pages 853 documents. (New York: G. P. Putnam and Son. \$12.50). De Siebert was secretary of the Imperial Russian Embassy in London. The correspondence of Isvolsky, Russian Ex-Foreign Minister, is contained in the "Third Collection" to be published in two volumes, the first of which has already appeared as "A Black Book" under Soviet Government direction. (No attention is given to these documents by the press, but every attention is given to Clemenceau, or Lloyd George, or Lord Birkenhead or whoever is still prominent in maintaining the farcical story about Germany "willing" the war deliberately and exclusively). Lewis S. Gannett quotes also Professor S. R. Fay's "New Light on the Origins of the War", which is an analysis of Kautsky's disclosures of the German archives and of those of Richard Gooss in the Austrian archives. There is a point Mr. Gannett has missed in his documentation, and that is in quoting Sir Edward Grey's Note to M. Cambon, French Ambassador to London, November 22, 1912. His quotation is quite correct as it appeared in the British White Book, as follows:

From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not and ought not to be regarded as an engagement that commits either government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to cooperate in war.

You have, however, pointed out that, if either government had grave reasons to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other. I agree that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action the plans of the general staffs would at once be taken into consideration and the governments could then decide what effect should be given to them.

That quotation is quite correct, as taken from the British White Book. But Sir Edward Grey read that note in his speech to Parliament, August 3, 1914, and he omitted entirely the last sentence, which we have placed in italics. The note as read by Grey appears in Hansard (Aug. 3, '14), Vol. 65, n. 1813 and is without the last sentence. Viviani, French Premier, read the full text in the French Chamber next day, and in full it was incorporated

in the French Yellow Book. So it had to go in the British White Book in full. Viviani had no need to hide the truth—that there were definite Anglo-French military and naval plans laid beforehand, and jointly agreed upon as disclosed in that last sentence. He could rely upon French support against Germany, in view of the geographical position of France and the expected response to the French chauvinist appeal against Germany. But Grey had to conceal the policy the British Foreign office had pursued consistently since Lord Lansdowne's term of office as foreign minister, which policy had resulted in what has now come to be known as the "encircling offensive". Grey had to present his case in conformity with the many public declarations made previously by himself and other British government ministers, that the British Foreign office had entered into no agreements whatsoever of a military character with an outside power. Here is a reference to some of these declarations:

On 10th March 1913, Mr. Asquith, replying to a question in the Commons from Lord Hugh Cecil, denied that England was under an "obligation arising owing to an assurance given by the Ministry in the course of diplomatic negotiations, to send a very large armed force out of this country to operate in Europe." On 24th March 1913 he made similar denials in reply to questions from Sir W. Byles and Mr. King. On 14th April, 1913, Mr. Runciman in a speech at Birkenhead denied "in the most categorical way" the existence of a secret understanding with any foreign Power. On 3 May 1913 the Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Harcourt, declared publicly that he "could conceive no circumstances in which Continental operations would not be a crime against the people of this country." On 28 June 1913 the under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Acland, declared publicly that "in no European question are we concerned to interfere with a big army." On July 1, 1913, Lord Loreburn (Lord Chancellor from 1906 to 1912) said, "that any British Government would be so guilty towards our country as to take up arms in a foreign quarrel is more than I can believe." On 28 April 1914 and again on 11 June 1914 Sir Edward Grey confirmed, in the House of Commons, Mr. Asquith's assertion, made 10 and 24 March 1913, of British freedom from engagements with Continental Powers. (Albert Jay Nock. The Myth of a Guilty Nation. Page 103).

It is thus very easy to see why Grey omitted that last sentence. His government had denied the existence of any commitments of such a nature. By the time the British White Book was published the nations were at war and the admission was not then subject to effective discussion. In the meantime, on 3rd Aug. 1914 (same day as Grey's speech), Mr. Asquith said in the House of Commons:—

If I am asked what we are fighting for, I reply in two sentences: In the first place, to fulfil a solemn international obligation . . . Secondly, we are fighting . . . to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed in defiance of international good faith.

The small nation, of course, was Belgium. The Belgian appeal was a great help to Sir Edward Grey. The "treaty" of 1839 was well used. It was a device used to present the case in a false light. The "German" had to become a "Hun." Let us quote Mr. Lloyd George as he expressed himself just eight months before the war broke out:—

The German army is vital, not merely to the existence of the German Empire, but to the very life and independence of the nation itself, surrounded as Germany is by other nations, each of which possesses armies about as

(Continued on page 2)