

Economic Causes of War

Article No. 4.

Why did Russia go into the Great War? For the purpose of an extension to the Mediterranean and the acquisition of Constantinople. In 1914, a Russian Dr. Mitrofaroff, said: "The expansion southward is for Russia a historical, political and economic necessity, and the foreign power which stands in the way is an enemy power. . . . It is briefly and precisely, everywhere and at every point throughout the Levant Russia has been and is being, in trying to solve her most vital problems in the Eastern question, the resistance of Germany, acting either alone or as the ally of Austria. . . . It has become quite clear to the Russians that everything remains as it is the road to Constantinople will have to be carried through Berlin."

On June 3rd, 1914, in the "London Times" we read this: "There are signs that Russia has done her defensive strategy. The increased guns in the Asiatic Army Corps, the growing efficiency of the navy, and the improvements made or planned in strategic railways are, again, matters which cannot be left out of account. These things are well calculated to make the Germans anxious." All previous British policy in the East was opposed to the Russian possession of Constantinople. The Crimean War was fought to prevent this Russian expansion. The "Daily Chronicle" war book says: "It was in British interests at that time to resist the natural ambition of Russia for an outlet to the Mediterranean." Russian ports all being frozen up during the winter months Constantinople would have been the all year port for the shipment of their agricultural products. Russia fought Turkey on behalf of the massacred Christians in 1878-79, and at that time we had a duel of platitudes between the political parties of England. The following extract from McCarthy's "History of our own Times," illustrates the situation:

Gladstone: "Be just and fear not."
Beaconsfield: "No sentiment."
"The public conscience," said one, "the interests of Britain," said the other. "The Crimes of Turkey"—one cry: "The ambitions of Russia"—the other cry.
The position of Turkey was precarious, and when Russia headed for Constantinople Britain sent a fleet up the Dardanelles and checked her. Miliukoff, the Russian Foreign Secretary of March, 1916, who had declared himself against the neutralization of the Dardanelles, said: "The timely realization of the peril of the Berlin-Baghdad movement helped Russian diplomacy to attain agreement among the Allies last April (1915) regarding the disposal of the Straits."

Russia purchased Austria's neutrality in the Russo-Turkish war by recognizing Austria's right to an indefinite occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina which territory Serbia desired. Previous to 1908 Russia had only used Serbia as a pawn to keep Austria quiet. In 1908 Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, this move being approved of by Russia in exchange for a promise of Austria's diplomatic support when the question of the Straits was raised, with a view to the abrogation of sundry European treaties prohibiting the access of Russian warships to the Black Sea. Owing to Austria failing to keep this promise Russia turned and used Serbia as a tool against her. Russia having her designs frustrated after the Crimean and Russo-Turkish wars started to expand Eastward to the Pacific Ocean. She became active in Korea and Manchuria, and between 1901-04, American commerce suffered considerably from Russian competition. Russia occupied Newchang in 1901, during the Boxer uprising, and established a measure of military control over Manchuria. In the same year the Chinese Eastern Railway was opened under Russian control. Russia pursued her policy by discrimination of railway rates, diverting trade through the port of Dalny and subsidizing fourteen steamers, and by advancing

large sums to Chinese merchants (to purchase Russian goods) through the Russo-Chinese Bank. The same bank established a commercial bank to sell Russian oils and sugar. At this time, when foreigners were excluded from the interior, Russian subjects were to be met everywhere, building flour mills, developing mines and selling Russian goods. Because of Russian oil being imported free from tax American sales of kerosene at Newchang fell from 3,172,000 gallons in 1901 to 603,180 gallons in 1902, and American flour was almost driven from the Chinese market. Russia obtained Port Arthur when Russia, France and Germany stepped in after the Japanese-Chinese war and told Japan to keep her hands off the spoils.

Then, again, Russian economic interests lay also in the vast timber limits of Korea. In 1903 the Royal Timber Company, in which the Tsar was well represented, scooped up millions of profits in the Yalu River valley. This led to the Russo-Japanese war, when the pagan Japanese were financed by good Christian Americans to slay their Russian Christian brethren. After the Japs had defeated Russia, Japan retained control of the railway I have mentioned, the financial system of Manchuria, with a certain amount of control over the currency, and established a strong banking system. After the restoration of peace, American trade in Manchuria seemed to have a clear field. The subsidized Russian lines to Port Arthur and Dalny had disappeared and the disorganized conditions of the country had caused the Russian flour mills to close so that American flour became in greater demand than ever before. American kerosene was in full control of the Eastern market. Since 1908 and 1909, however, the American trade has again fallen off because Japan controls the railway and to a certain extent the financial system and diverts trade by discriminating rates just as Russia had done. (I will give the reader more details when dealing with Japan): This curtailment of Russian policy in the East brought her back again to expansion southwards, toward Persia and the Mediterranean Sea.

The policy toward Persia brought about its division with Britain in 1907 against the wishes of the Persians. The "Daily News," January 11th, 1912, said: "On the 31st August, 1907, Sir Ed. Grey made a solemn covenant in which this country and Russia mutually engaged to respect the integrity and independence of Persia. What has Sir Ed. Grey done to keep the pledge he made in our name? He has defended Russia's action in seizing North Persia; he has insisted in Persia putting her finances under the charge of the bitterest enemy in that country of British enterprise. What does he intend to do? Two things—to seize Southern Persia and so complete the annihilation of Persia's integrity and independence and to help build a railway across Persia which will connect Russia with India. Sir Ed. Grey's record in Persia is to have undone the work of more than a century of British statesmanship."

"Why has Sir Ed. Grey chosen this disastrous course? Nobody dares to suggest that he or anybody in England believes that the annihilation of Persia or the dismemberment of China are good in themselves. They are universally confessed to be disasters; but it is suggested by Sir Edward's scant following that they are part of a greater good. What is that greater good? The key to Sir Ed. Grey's policy is the fatal antagonism to Germany. . . . The time has come to state with a clearness which cannot be mistaken that Sir Ed. Grey as Foreign Secretary is impossible."

The secret treaty with Russia during the war gave her full power in Northern Persia and Constantinople. Britain was to acquire the neutral zone of Persia. (I hope to deal in more detail with Persia in another article). All the Liberal papers of any standing in England were opposed to Grey's policy and even hinted he was bringing on an European

Armageddon. If we read the British "White Papers" of the Great War, we find in No. 17 a report from Buchanan, Ambassador at St. Petersburg: "Russia could not allow Austria to crush Serbia and become a dominant power in the Balkans, and if she feels sure of the help of France she will face all risks of a war." The powder was ready for the match, and that Russia's attitude was the match is the conclusion I have arrived at through a study of the British White Papers. Again, Sir Auckland Geddes, speaking on the Man Power Bill, January 15th, 1918, in the British Commons, said: "It is right that the country should realize what the events in Russia mean to those nations which came into the war as a result of Russia's action in 1914." (Poor Belgium). And in the report of an interview with Baron Rosen, late Russian Ambassador to the United States of America, the "Manchester Guardian," February 27th, 1918, says: "As one who saw the inside of the Tsar diplomacy, I knew the war was coming as far back as 1912. Behind the curtain of Russian secret diplomacy I saw that war was being made inevitable by the rising tide of revolution from below. A clique of Ministers round the Tsar's court knew that their only hope to stave off the revolution was by setting the armies marching."

A war to "defend small nations"; and yet, "John Bull's" poster in July, 1914, had written in large letters: "To Hell with Serbia," and Sir Ed. Grey in the British White Papers, July 24th, 1914, No. 6, said "Direct British interest in Serbia was nil, and a war on behalf of that country would never be sanctioned by the British public."

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