

A Worker Looks at the World

By ERNEST ETTLINGER

IN spite of our boasted civilization, the conditions under which the Human Race still live are that of the Jungle. Force is in the last analysis the deciding factor, and those who can muster the greatest battalions are the rulers of the world.

Nationalism and Reaction are sweeping the world as never before, and we see a situation which is unequalled in the world's history. On the one side the forces of proletarian revolution have been checked, on the other side the alliances of the various capitalist powers have been shattered by their divergent interests under the stress of the competition for control of the world's market. In making a review of the dominant capitalist interests, it would be well to analyse the political and economic currents in the important nations, and their relation to the general international situation.

Germany.

Germany, economically, is disintegrating rapidly under the force of the French invasion of the Ruhr. The mark today is practically worthless and the cost of living is constantly soaring to higher levels. The position of the German masses is pitiful. We have the spectacles of a people who in 1914 enjoyed a fairly high standard of living, and who are today reduced to conditions where actual starvation is constantly menacing. And yet in spite of the misery and poverty prevailing among the masses in Germany, there has been no real co-ordinated revolutionary outbreak. Here and there, under the constant stress of existence, riots have broken out but they have all been crushed with a ruthless hand. And the recent change in government is due more than anything else to a feeling of hopelessness among German capitalists with the Ruhr venture, and a hope that the Stressemann government would find some way to negotiate a settlement with the French. In Germany among practically all classes a bitter hatred prevails against France, who is looked upon as the arch enemy which is slowly destroying the culture and civilization of Germany. And it is this intense national feeling which is one of the great bars to a workers' revolution in Germany, although the economic conditions would indicate that such a revolutionary outbreak is inevitable.

In Germany as in most parts of Europe, there is no hope, only a bitter hatred against all foreigners. In the Ruhr region, in spite of the bitter anti-French feeling, the economic situation is so distressing that at the end of May, a wave of strikes swept that region, led by the Communist and Syndicalist forces. The immediate effect was an increase in wages, but this has long since been wiped out by the fall of the mark, and the rising cost of the necessities of life. With the cessation of passive resistance in the Ruhr, and the increasing misery on all sides, the stage is set for a bitter struggle for power between the German Fascisti and the Communists as to who should control the future of Germany. The trend on the world stage today tends toward Fascism, and it is highly possible that the Fascist coup d'etat will be successful unless the forces of class conscious workers are sufficiently powerful to crush the Fascist revolt.

France.

France is in the meantime, planning to become the dominant capitalist power in Europe. Today she possesses the largest army and air fleet in the world. By her system of alliances with Belgium, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia, she has consolidated her position tremendously. Her present policy is to stay in the Ruhr until she has satisfied her aspirations, which, when viewed in the light of capitalist policies, means the political and economic control of the rich industrial region east

of the Rhine. And yet in spite of France's ambitious political and economic aspirations, her financial position is far from being enviable. Financially she is practically bankrupt, and she is continually facing a deficit in her budget, which she balances by issuing vast amounts of paper currency. Thus the value of the franc is forced lower and lower. The Labor Movement of France seems powerless to seriously effect the policies of the government, and is split up into two factions, one element being reformist and the other revolutionary. The Communist Party of France, while showing some strength, and having considerable influence among the more advanced section of the workers, is yet too weak to overthrow the French capitalist class. The government today rests mostly upon the support of the peasants, who, due to peculiar circumstances, are faring fairly well, and are quite willing to support the reactionary and chauvinistic policy of the government.

Italy.

In Italy the Fascist Government having ruthlessly smashed the labor and revolutionary movement is proceeding with its plans of reconstruction. The government has been successful in pushing through its electoral reform bill through terrorism and intimidation, and thus is secure in power for another five years, unless overthrown by an armed uprising. In spite of the fact that Italy is a paradise of capitalist reaction, the economic and financial conditions have not improved greatly since the Fascist revolution and the lira is still falling. The foreign policy of the Fascist regime has of late been revealed by the demonstrations made against both Greece and Yugoslavia in true Fascist fashion, and has for its aim control of the Adriatic. Italy is faced by the combination of nations to the East of her known as the Little Entente, and in order to retain a balance of power, Italy is seeking an alliance with both Hungary and Bulgaria.

England.

As far as England is concerned to-day, her prestige in Europe is on the wane. Between England and France an intense hostility exists due to the differences between their aims in the Ruhr and their viewpoint on the general European situation. England needs a restored Europe for her products, and the activity of France is seriously hindering the economic restoration of that continent. This hostility will in the future probably culminate in war, and once more Britain's noble heroes will be called upon to roll the Frenchies in the mud in the name of humanity, and democracy. England, feeling herself isolated, is turning towards the United States and hopes to reach an understanding with that country. Financially, England is still strong, and the value of the pound is almost at par, but economically there is stagnation, and unemployment on a tremendous scale has existed for over three years. In the Near East Great Britain is actively trying to consolidate her economic and political position, and her ultimatum to Russia a few months ago strengthened her in that region. At the present time she has arrived at an understanding with the Turkish ruling class, to mutually exploit the oil regions of Asia Minor, for the benefit of the human race, and incidentally, the British and Turkish ruling classes. As far as the masses of the British workers are concerned, they are living in poverty and misery as in the days of yore, in spite of the fact that England was to be a country fit for heroes to live in. The labor movement, however, is somewhat recovering from the blows dealt it in 1921 and 1922, and amalgamation among the various unions in order to strengthen them is under way, also a great organizational campaign is now being carried out under the banner of the General Council of the Trade Unions. The trend among the British Workers is towards political action, and the prestige of the British Labor Party is constantly on the increase, although its program and leadership is frankly reformistic, and

merely seeks to substitute a Labor Government for the present Unionist Government. In its program and platform it has again and again stated that it does not aim to abolish the capitalist system, but merely to remove some of the obvious defects of Capitalism.

The United States.

The United States is faced by an entirely different situation than the rest of the Capitalist powers. The class struggle is yet, still in its infancy, and has not, except superficially, manifested itself on the psychology of the masses. The onslaughts of the capitalist class on the trade unions, are beginning to create conditions that in the near future will probably mean the growth of a political party expressing the aspirations of the industrial workers and the mass of poor farmers.

Industrially and economically the United States is still advancing rapidly and, from a productive and financial point of view, is the most developed of all capitalist countries. In spite of the intense exploitation of the mass of the workers, the U. S. still offers to its slaves a comparatively high standard of life, a standard which is immeasurably higher than that received by the workers of the other countries. It is the farmers of America who at the present time are the greatest sufferers of capitalist exploitation, and the past four years have seen them sink further and further into the morass of poverty. While ostensibly owning their little patch of land, they are bound body and soul to the capitalist class.

At the present time a so-called business boom is sweeping the country which has resulted in more or less steady employment, and increased wages in some trades.

Politically and industrially the American capitalist class faces the future with confidence, supreme in the belief that the destiny of the world rests with them and their heirs and that America will be the future ruler of Capitalism, just as Rome was ruler in the ancient world.

Japan.

Japan at the present time is concerned exclusively with her expansion in Eastern Asia. The Washington Conference has somewhat checked the Japanese ambitions and at the present time, due to the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese treaty and the recent fearful earthquake, Japan's interests will be turned to internal reconstruction and development. Japan is a rapidly growing industrial country, in spite of the lack of raw materials, and the economic depression which has existed since the early period of 1920, but her hopes rest on her ability to eventually absorb the potential richness of China and make that country a vassal to her aims. But between China and Japan there stands the power of the U. S. whose aim is to prevent Japanese expansion in Asia, and between the two countries there is a clash of interests which meet in China. Viewing the psychology of the Japanese and American masses, war would be extremely popular in both countries, and under the slogans of democracy, supremacy of the white race, banzia, etc., the workers of both countries would cheerfully slaughter one another.

(To be continued in next issue.)

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