

The next Great War

The prophets are busy with their prophesying. The same folks that for years have been telling us that the way to ensure peace was to be prepared for war, and who for long have iterated and reiterated the idle phantasy that the very development of the instruments of destruction had abolished the danger of a world wide war by making war too hideous for advanced peoples to tolerate, utterly oblivious to the fact that they have backed the wrong horse every time, now behold in war new hope of eternal peace. This time it is the smashing of Prussian militarism which is to draw every savage tooth and cut every bloody claw, the wide world over, and confer upon this blood-soddened planet surcease from the agony and waste and weariness of war.

We know that, so far was it from being true that to be armed to the teeth was any guarantee of peace, that it was only while the nations were unprepared for war that peace reigned. We know that, so far was it from being true that the development of the instruments of destruction had rendered war too awful for advanced peoples to contemplate, that among the teeming millions of the most advanced races of the earth the greatest triumphs of the engines of butchery were received with the greatest joy. Three torpedoes send fifteen hundred stout and gallant seamen to their graves, and a nation laughs; the guns of British warships kill "fifteen hundred Germans in their trenches in thirty minutes", and half a continent applaud; a single French shell strikes a regiment dead by sheer shock, it is reported, and the most advanced of nations fear the report is too good to be true. There is not one of the nine billigerant races, but would hail with acclamations of joy the advent of some new agent of slaughter that would enable their side to mow down men, not by regiments, but by armies.

The claims that peace was to come through armaments no sooner prove themselves to be ludicrously false than we are told that peace is to come through war. Prussian militarism is to fall, and after that all the swords are to be beaten into plough-shares, and all the bullets cast into printers' letter for the advancement of culture, and all the Tommies turned into tinkers and tailors and raisers of Ostend rabbits and spring onions. And there is to be no more war and no more iron crosses, and no more wooden ones. So they say all that know about it.

The Socialist, however, knows better. He knows the Prussian militarism has been and is nothing more than the force instrument by means of which German capitalists calculate to win and maintain a preferential place in the world's markets for the products of her factories. The bellicose trait in the make-up of the Kaiser and his militarists, and the remnants of feudalism which still attach to German institutions (to the confusion of many British pseudo-Socialists, who claim that "the German capitalists have yet to win their emancipation"), are simply superficialities which are useful to the German capitalists. They mean as much as the feudal remnants which remain in this country; and, like these latter, they are permitted to remain because, so far are they from indicating that the capitalists have not won their emancipation, that they are only instruments in capitalist hands to prevent the working class from gaining theirs.

It is German capitalist money controlled by the capitalists themselves which has paid for the vast German war machine without which the Kaiser and his war chiefs would be impotent. This money would never have been forthcoming save to further capitalist interests, and those who think the smashing of "Prussian militarism" is going to set free the Germanic races for the development of industry, and to disarm the nations of the world, are woefully out of it.

Nothing can be plainer than that the mad race for armaments has grown directly out of the development of industry. The expense of modern warfare is so great that only highly industrial development can support it. Hence no nation has attained a front-rank place in the race except its armaments are founded upon industrial development. Great Britain, France and Germany are direct cases, whilst the might of industrially backward Russia rests upon the gold of her allies.

It is clear, then, that it is industrial development itself which produces the modern phenomenon, militarism, neck and neck companion of the modern phenomenon, Imperialism. This is because industrial development means a large and increasing amount of surplus products for which markets have to be found. The power and need for vast armaments, therefore, go hand in hand, and they develop, not out of Prussian militarism, or Russian militarism, or French militarism, or British militarism, or Japanese militarism, but out of industrial advance.

Granted, then, the uninterrupted development of the present social system, the facts point irresistably, to further great wars. They indicate that no sooner will the present struggle have ceased than diplomats will be at work forming new alliances, and the Krupps and Armstrongs busy evolving fresh "surprises" and mightier means of war.

It was only because Germany happened to be more advanced industrially, and therefore the more immediate rival, that Great Britain is not on her side now. It may be recalled in the anxious days before the war, that powerful vehicle of British capitalist opinion, *The Daily Chronicle*, made out a very strong case for taking sides, not against Germany, but against Russia. The fears which prompted this point of view are very significant. The success of the Allies will almost certainly place Russia in a position of unparalleled strength. With her military prestige at its summit, with her capitalists freed by her last two wars from the restrictions of her feudal nobility, with ruthless taxation driving her peasants into the hands of usurers, and the usurers driving them from their lands into the towns and factories, with the rapid advance of capitalistic industry in Russia which these things portend, the "Russian menace" commercially will equal the "Russian menace" territorially.

Japan, whose industrial development has been the wonder of the age, and has brought her from obscurity to alliance with "proud Britain", and America, who has already begun to "think Imperially", are also destined to take a very strong line in the struggle for markets.

Hence the road of plotting and scheming and "building up" for the next great war must begin before the grass grows over the myriads of corpses of this one. And this road of blood and tears must be followed by the human race until the working class of the world, for the opportunity to exploit whom all modern wars are fought, determine to find their emancipation in Socialism. In the name of suffering humanity we call you to our banner!

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