

# IN THE CAMP OF OUR ENEMIES

## The Death of President Harding

By I. Amter.

The death of President Harding removes one more of the mediocrities that capital uses as puppets in ruling the United States. A journalist by profession, Harding was brought out of the dark into the limelight in 1920, when, owing to the abundance of Republican candidates for the presidency of the United States presented at the Republican convention, it looked as if an agreement would not be reached.

Just as in 1916, when Wilson and Hughes were nominated, and Wall Street, scrutinizing the nominations, said: "*The presidential nominations are most satisfactory from a financial standpoint*," it could and did say the same thing in 1920, when Harding and Cox were nominated. From a financial standpoint, there was little to fear from either candidate—both were most satisfactory. It was merely a question of whether Rockefeller was to rule the country for four years through Harding, or Morgan through Cox. The "People" had suffered endless deception at the hands of Wilson: he had paid no attention to the sufferings of the farmers, he had disregarded the coal miners and steel workers, and had made wanton use of the military against them. Hence, true to form, the American people "changed horses", in the hope of a betterment of their condition.

Unemployment became a serious factor at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921. During the latter year, it attained the startling number of 8,000,000, including a million war veterans. Harding called an Unemployment Conference of merchants and big employers, together with such labor "representatives" as Samuel Gompers. The conference established the fact that unemployment existed. It decided to do what inevitably is done in such matters, especially in America: it appointed a commission to *study the question*. Its sole recommendation for immediate application was that the employers should provide work for the jobless! It was a genial conference, and met with the full approval of Gompers.

In 1920 came the tremendous strikes of the miners, railroadmen and textile workers, involving 1,500,000 men. The capitalists resorted to injunctions, to the use of thugs, police and militia. They made widespread use of the American institution of the "frameup", in order to get rid of the most militant leaders and workers, and intimidate the rest. Then, when the workers showed no intention of giving up the fight, Federal troops were ordered into the field, fully equipped for war: tanks, gas, airplanes, etc. Finally, in September, 1922, the infamous Daugherty injunction was issued—and recently was made

permanent—whereby strikes, sympathy with the strikers and every form of aid to them were prohibited, infractions being penalized by imprisonment.

The farmers of America have been the especial victims of American exploitation. Two millions of the farming population left the farms in 1922. More than 38 per cent of the American farmers are tenants: the farms of more than 40 per cent are mortgaged. The farmers have a load of \$8,000,000,000 in mortgages to bear. They are robbed by the railroads: they are robbed by the middlemen.

Harding had to make a gesture in support of the farmers. A Farm Credits Bill was passed before the close of the last session of Congress. The farmers are so elated at this achievement, that when Harding was on his trip to the West and Alaska—the tour on which he died—he was frequently greeted with taunts from the farmers. He was prevented from intervening in the election in Minnesota on behalf of the Republican nominee—and nevertheless the Republican was overwhelmingly defeated by the Farmer Labor candidate! Wheat has gone down to 91 cents a bushel. That sounds a tragic note that could not be offset by Harding's promises. The attitude of the country generally to Harding and his policies was expressed in the crushing defeat administered to the Republican Party at the elections in November.

But to the capitalists, Harding was very valuable. A tariff was enacted that has put billions into the treasuries of the steel manufacturers alone. He allowed numerous mergers to take place—in spite of the fact that a Sherman Anti-trust law exists. Steel concerns, packing, copper, textile, woolen concerns, banks and trust companies have merged—to the enhancement of their profits. Harding was for the consolidation of the railroads into four systems, which would practically eliminate the "competition" that is held up to the American public as the *sine qua non* of existence and progress. During the last year, stock dividends amounting to billions have been distributed among the fortunate stockholders of the trusts—and these dividends are tax-free. Harding guaranteed a "fair" return to the railroad companies. He tried to rob the United States treasury of \$500,000,000, as a subsidy for the shipping concerns, and was only prevented by the obstructive tactics of the progressives in Congress.

In fact, voices are becoming loud for economic reciprocity—or political union! The West Indies, suffering and crying out under the tyrannical rule of American bayonets, have likewise come under the tutelage of American imperialism.

China, the latest adventure of American finance, is bound very soon to be the field of serious conflict. The rush of England, America and Japan to secure control of China's resources and the administration of her affairs, and the intention of Great Britain to reinforce the naval base at Singapore, augur an early conflict.

American capital, under the aegis of Harding, has also entered Austria. Morgan participated in the international loan to Austria, which has practically made Austria a playground of international trickery. The offer of a loan to Persia, provided it is secured by concession, and of a loan to Germany, provided she accepts the same terms and statutes as Austria, the buying up of industrial properties in Germany and Austria, all demonstrate that American imperialism is now full-fledged and ready to take up the fight with England and Japan.

The attitude of the Harding administration to Soviet Russia has been similar to its attitude on many other questions: vacillating. Shortly after taking office, through Secretary of State Hughes, Harding announced that America would be ready to enter into relations with the Soviet Government, if certain guarantees were given. Soviet Russia was prepared to negotiate these demands, but, little by little, the American government has receded from this position. There is no doubt that the American government hoped that the famine of 1920 would undermine the Soviet government and lead to a revolt of the peasants. The philanthropic assistance that was given through the American Administration had the ulterior aim of enabling the American government to get in touch with the peasants in the villages, to learn their real conditions and to aid in any revolt that might occur.

American industrialists and financiers have visited Soviet Russia and have been impressed with the conditions there. Mr. Bush, who was in Soviet Russia a short time ago, remarked that conditions were vastly superior in Russia to what he had seen in Germany—under the rule of capitalism. Senator Wheeler, on his return to the United States, said that the American Government might as well recognize Soviet Russia now, as she will be bound to do so later.

The movement for the recognition of Soviet Russia, even in the Republican Party, is growing. Several of the progressive are open protagonists of recognition. It is clear that oil and other

concessions will be the only objects that will lead to this recognition.

Harding's latest feat was his fight to get America into the World Court. Although the fear of becoming embroiled in European affairs was one of the causes of Wilson's defeat, Harding believed that by pretending that the World Court has nothing to do with the League of Nations, he gradually could lead America into the League—without the people being aware of it. The progressives sounded the alarm. The chairman of the Republican Party protested: Harding was forced to modify his demand, to the effect that America would join only if the Court were completely dissociated from the League. It is clear, however, that American finance is preparing to enter the League, but will use the same deception that the "pacifist" Wilson employed in getting America into the World War.

To carry out its aims, American imperialism must be furnished not only with gold, but with arms. To be sure, the Washington Disarmament Conference—that other achievement of Harding—is supposed to have limited armament. But air fleets, gases of the most deadly sort, fast cruisers and submarines, are more than substitutes for the obsolete battleships. Hence the workshops and laboratories of the countries are working at high speed, inventing and improving the methods of destruction. *Eighty-five per cent of the American budget—as Harding admitted on his tour—is spent for wars, past, present and future.* The militarism that began during the World War is being firmly established in the United States. *The country is so organized that an army of 3,000,000 can be mobilized within a month's time.* In their spare time, the generals of the American army travel about the country organizing White Guard leagues. Meanwhile the Ku Klux Klan is thriving, the American and Italian Fascisti are getting a foothold in the country—*countenanced and supported by the government of the United States!*

This is the record of two years of Harding's administration, differing not a jot from that of Wilson, the Democrat.

What can be expected of Calvin Coolidge, the vice-president who now assumes the presidency? Coolidge is one of the bitterest reactionaries in the country. More mediocre even than Harding, he can give utterance to a flow of more platitudes than any other public official. Hated and despised by all except the most reactionary elements, Coolidge does not even enjoy the esteem of his own party. When governor of the State of Massachusetts, he broke the policemen's strike in 1920 by simply discharging all the policemen's organizations throughout the State. —As the "strong" man from Massachusetts, he was elected to the vice-presidency of the United States. This did not increase his popularity: on July 4, 1922, as a speaker at the celebration in St. Paul, he was booed from the stand and not allowed to continue his speech.

It is very possible that strong reaction may take hold of affairs in the United States for a time. The "reds" are gaining in power: Communists, militants, radicals of every shade. The farmers are in the foreground in this movement. The organization of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, the strides made by the Left Wing in the trade unions, under the leadership of the Trade Union-Educational League, the expulsions and threatened expulsions from the American Federation of Labor, the growing sentiment in favor of Soviet Russia—which the government and Gompers are combating even with illicit means—are inclining the capitalists to action. There was a growing feeling that Harding was too moderate with the "reds", and that a sterner course should be steered. Harding however, was very discreet: he knew that his chances of reelection—provided he were nominated—depended upon his placating the progressives and radicals. If capital has decided to take steps against the revolutionists, Coolidge will be the man to carry out their will.

The death of Harding helps the Republican Party out of a dilemma. It would have been difficult to deny Harding the renomination next year. Yet there is not the slightest doubt that if he had been put up, the Republican Party would have been defeated—last November's elections and the recent election in Minnesota tell the tale. The Republican Party can now adopt a more liberal program and win; the man who is designated for this role is Borah. He is the only man in the Republican Party who can unite the reactionaries and the progressives, and lead the party to victory.

A taste of terrorization for the Communists—just enough to satisfy the vast army of the conservatives that the country is not being handed over to the revolutionists—and the assumption of leadership by a progressive, will give control to Rockefeller for four more years. Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Borah—these are mere figureheads used by the capitalists of America to make the people think they rule.