

The Defeat of England and America in the Ruhr

By I. Amler.

The Ruhr adventure is generally considered exclusively the property of the French and Belgian governments, with the implied support or toleration of Great Britain and Italy. But the fact is that America has had very much to do with the whole enterprise, both tacitly and more lately openly.

It has long been known that two American groups of bankers were directly interested in the Ruhr occupation. Harri-man has been siding with Schneider-Creusot, while Morgan has aided his ally, the British Government. The occupation, with its resultant passive resistance on the part of Germany, has been a severe blow to British trade. It is true that the seizure of the collieries by the French and the shifting of all coal supplies and all coal mined to French mills has compelled Germany to make large purchases of coal in England. Hence the increased mining in England, which has meant further profits for the British mine owners and considerable work for the miners. But Germany has been one of England's best customers. The decline of the mark and the consequent closing of the German market has been a serious matter to English industry. Hence the British have been greatly interested in an early settlement of the Ruhr question.

Furthermore, the French occupation has given France every excuse for continuing to expand and strengthen her military establishment, much to the despair of the British nation. The result is that officially it is admitted by the British Government that there is no government in Europe that militarily can compare with France at the present moment.

Not being able to interfere, the British Government has been obliged to seek assistance. This aid she sought from the American Government. The settlement of the British debt—which is said to have "sent a shiver down the spine of every Britisher"—nevertheless was excellent business. For several decades there has not been keen sympathy between England and America. The economic antagonisms, the sympathy of the American people with the Irish in their struggles against British imperialism, have tended to create a chasm between the two nations. America was convinced that she won the war for the Allies—and should be duly rewarded for it. The huge debts which the Allies owe America have acted as a lever for American interference, openly or covertly, in all European affairs. But the divided attitude of American finance in the Ruhr controversy has kept the American Government from taking active part in the matter.

The advances of the steel industry of France, and particularly the strengthening of the military arm of the French Government, especially in the aviation department, have raised great apprehensions in the minds of American capitalists. Hence the appeals of the British Government have not been in vain. The "friends and associates" of the Great War have separated. England did not and could not agree to the plans of the French in the Ruhr nor to the method proposed by the French Government for the settlement of the German reparation question. Poincaré indicated clearly that he would go ahead regardless of British opinion: France was in the Ruhr to stay until she received adequate guarantees. Recognizing her weakness and helplessness, England declared she would make a separate proposal, which she would submit to the Allies—and to the *United States Government*. The American Government had to make a decision—it made a Morgan decision. American unity was established—and England and America decided to cooperate. An alliance was formed for the presentation of different demands and forms of settlement.

France was not to be intimidated—particularly since, in the negotiations, the "inveterate foe", the Germans, were open to persuasion. The German industrialists of the Ruhr—Stinnes, Thyssen, Krupp and Co.—recognized that a complete victory of the Allies—not over Germany, but over themselves—would cripple themselves and German industry. Hence for months they have been negotiating with Loucheur, Schneider, de Wendel, and Creusot—and came to an arrangement. French and German industry were to cooperate, and a government favorable to such cooperation was to be put in power in Berlin. The cries of the Nationalists and of the Communists have been too much for Cuno, who is a weakling. A strong man was to be installed, a man favorable to a concern composed of these Rhenish and French magnates—if not openly, at least silently.

How was this trick to be performed? Very simply. The demands for the resignation of Cuno were growing; the time for his retirement and for a Stinnes man to be put in his place was approaching. The demands of the workers grew louder and their meaning became clear. Cuno was forced to resign—

and Stresemann became the Chancellor. The coalition of the French and German industrialists economically has been extended to the political sphere. France is the victor.

Hence, despite their combined debts against France, despite their overbearing economic power, despite the semi-acquiescent attitude of Italy, and the disgruntled stand of Belgium, England and America have been defeated in the Ruhr. French bayonets will remain in the Ruhr; the British proposition will not be realized: France has established her hegemony over Europe.

True, politics is not conducted in this pristine manner: there is no such thing as a complete supremacy of one nation. France will finally have to compromise: *but France will determine the extent of the compromise and not England and America.* In all probability, an Inter-Allied Commission will be appointed to determine the fate of Germany. Germany will probably be reduced to the status of a colony, the same as Austria has been. French guns will remain in the Ruhr: the French air fleet commands the world. The occupation of the Ruhr, which very belatedly England decided to pronounce "illegal", will become "legal."

America has been highly interested in the whole matter of the Ruhr, but the occupation of France and England with this problem has given her a free hand to gain power elsewhere. The Western world, the Near East, where America has successfully concluded a treaty with Turkey, and the Far East (China), where America has found sufficient excuse for intervention, have furnished fields enough for immediate exploitation. Hence the American Government hesitated about intervention in Europe. Declining export trade and the need of the German market, which has always been one of the most valuable for American industry, have forced the American Government to act. The determination not to become "embroiled in European affairs" has become a dead shibboleth: Business needs it and the *American flag follows business.* As a consequence, the "influence of the United States was put squarely behind the efforts of Premier Baldwin to force France to an accounting of her stewardship over Germany". But it came too late: France established herself and, with the aid of Stinnes' political power, rules Germany today.

Her rule will be short-lived—not because of the superior power of the Anglo-Saxon Allies. It cannot last because of the impasse into which capitalism has advanced, its inability to stabilize the market and finances and to feed the workers, and the new rising tide of Revolution. France went further in preparing for her domination. She knew that a coalition with Stinnes would arouse the German masses and increase the influence and power of the Communist Party. Hence she prepared all the border States. The raids on the Finnish Communists and the suppression of the Finnish Labor Party; the raids on the Lettish Communists; the repression against the Communists of Poland; the attacks on the workers of Hungary—all show a preconcerted plan to have the French vassals ready for action against Germany.

Irrespective of the turn that events will take in Germany—with the German Communists in the ascendancy—England and America have been beaten. France is the master for the moment in Europe.