

The Workers' Council

Vol. I.

New York, June 1, 1921

No. 5

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Published by the International Educational Association

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Editorials

CLASS WAR IN MINGO

To the miners of West Virginia, Colorado and Alabama the class struggle is no academic theory. They may never have heard of the Marxian theory, but again and again they have been active participants in bitter class wars. The most recent illustration of this perennial condition of industrial warfare is to be seen in the Mingo County battles between the miners and company guards which have already caused many deaths. The newspapers talk of riflemen resting on their guns, of sectors, terrain, etc., in the approved military jargon. They realize full well the existence of open warfare in West Virginia.

The average American takes this outbreak rather calmly, as calmly as he takes Southern lynchings. Industrial wars in the mining regions have by this time become an American institution. When the State and the Vigilantes set out to disarm the strikers, but leave the company guards, another name for the Vigilantes, in complete possession of their guns and rifles, his proverbial sense of fair play sees nothing wrong in such a policy.

A few weeks ago we very grandiloquently rebuffed the offer of Soviet Russia to resume trade relations because she does not offer sufficient guarantees for private property and because her government is not the free expression of her people. We hesitate about recognizing Mexico because we want to make sure of the ability of the Obregon regime

to protect life and property and maintain order. But in our own midst we find the existence of conditions, which in the case of Mexico, San Domingo or Hayti would be sufficient cause for intervention in order to give the natives a taste of American order.

It is notorious that in the mining regions of the United States we have a condition of absolute serfdom. The mine owners, who have acquired their mines in the main through some form of legal robbery, own not only the mines but also everything else in the neighborhood. They own the huts occupied by the miners, they own the stores, the press, the church and the minister, the school and the teacher. It is also the practice of the mine owners to own the government officials, especially the sheriffs and their deputies. In short, every possible precaution is taken to prevent any stray, unwelcome ideas from penetrating into the domain of the coal barons. And the company sheriffs and guards see to it that no pesky agitator wanders into their well-guarded preserves.

As if to prove that law and order do reign in these benighted regions, and that they as well as New York City are the recipients of the benign influence of the judiciary, we find that the courts have nobly come to the rescue of the harrassed coal companies by obligingly handing down a decision which bars any organizer of the United Mine Workers from attempting to persuade a miner from joining the union. According to an injunction issued by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, no organizer of the Mine Workers may come into certain designated counties and explain the meaning of unionism, because the miners work under an individual agreement in which they promise not to join a union; therefore a union organizer would be attempting to persuade men to break their contract. This decision was in line with the decision of the Supreme Court in the case of the Hitchman Coal and Coke Co. v. Mitchell, in which the court held that it was illegal for union organizers to persuade men who worked under anti-union agreements to join the union; that the Hitchman Company was entitled to the good will of its employees and that the pecuniary value of such good will was "incalculably great." It is to be understood that this in no way contradicts the "right" of free speech and assemblage. It is but a necessary regulation of this right to prevent "license" displacing liberty.

The various mine wars, including the present one in Mingo County, have been, at bottom, the result of the efforts of the mine owners to prevent the spread of unionism. They have insisted upon the open shop at all costs. It is but one example of the class struggle inherent in capitalist society. This struggle occasionally flares out in a dramatic battle as at Matewan in May, 1920, or in the deliberate burning of men and children as at Ludlow in 1913,

or in the numerous clashes in the Alabama coal fields. But it is going on all the time—this constant struggle of labor for a larger share in their product and for the building up of a strong union. Opposed to the workers is the economic power of the mine owners, protected by all the force of the state, the courts, the legislatures, and aided by the church and the school. It is an uneven battle, so long as workers face the master class with divided ranks, and without a clear concept of the nature of the struggle they are waging. Labor in West Virginia must realize that the only way out of their condition of wretchedness, of starvation, of enforced unemployment is gaining control of the machinery of the State and using it for the purpose of sweeping away the whole system of private ownership and control of the wealth and resources of the nation.

POLAND AND THE ALLIES

The convenient arrangement which gave the seas to England, and Europe to France, seems to be in danger of breaking down. No imperialist nation can stand still for any great period. England could not stand idly by and watch France and her satellites, especially Poland, grow in influence and Power. To do so would mean that France might become entirely independent of England and in the end be in a position to challenge England's supremacy.

The Silesian question afforded a convenient opportunity for bringing the matter to a head—and the once friendly Allies have almost been rattling the sword in their presen wordy dispute over the Polish coup.

The workers have something to learn from the Polish question, for it illustrates how easily they have been used by the opposing imperialist camps for their special benefit.

During the war the Allies in the secret treaties promised Russia a free hand in Poland with the right to unite the German and Austrian sections with the part already in the Russian Empire. It was thus that they fought for "Polish independence." It mattered not at all to the rulers what promises were made—so long as the Poles could be made to aid Allied Imperialism.

With the coming of the Russian revolution and the disintegration of the Russian armies, the situation changed. The Polish question received a new orientation. A "free Poland" was still the ostensible aim of the Allies, but this time its "freedom" was to be directed by a self-constituted committee of Polish landholders led by Dmowski and Paderewski, and well known for their anti-Semitism, and their love of German Junkerdom. Even Pilsudski, at present the most faithful servant of the French and Polish imperialists, was looked upon with suspicion, because he was believed to be tainted with Socialism and not amenable to Allied dictation.

Following the armistice, it was this element which was forced upon Poland. The Allies, and especially France, posed as the creators, friends and protectors of Poland. These same "friends" had but a short time previous agreed to hand over the whole of Poland

to the tender mercies of the Czar. But now that the possibility of a Workers Republic becoming firmly established loomed on the Eastern horizon. Poland, it was decided must be strengthened for it would be useful as a barrier against "Bolshevism."

France encouraged the Polish imperialists in hoping for the establishment of a swollen eastern boundary, the boundary of 1772. She was encouraged to war on Czecho-Slovakia, another Allied creation. She was allowed to seemingly defy the League of Nations by seizing Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, which her troops under the "insurgent" General Zeligowski are still holding. She was goaded into an invasion of Russia which brought her up as far east as Kiev. Only the determined stand of the workers of France, England, Germany, Belgium and of other countries, prevented the active aid which the Allies managed to give Poland secretly.

The Polish effort to establish a *fait accompli* in Upper Silesia was evidently one too much for the English ruling classes. It seems that it was timed to take place coincidentally with the much heralded French occupation of the Ruhr which was called off temporarily as a result of the German acceptance of the Supreme Council's Reparation demands, as part of the French effort at crippling still further the German industries. The English bourgeoisie however is opposed to any further weakening of Germany or any further strengthening of France and Poland, who now have the largest standing armies in the world.

Very soon it will be decided whether there is to be a peaceful settlement of the Silesian question; whether England and France will agree to allow Korfanty to stay or whether England will find it will suit her purposes better to quietly aid Germany in the attempt to drive the Poles out of Silesia.

It is very likely that the Polish workers will again be summoned to the slaughter in order to defend Poland's "sacred aspirations." It is a question whether the workers and peasants will answer this new call of the imperialists or whether they wrest power out of the hands of their rulers as the Russians have done and bring to an end the role which the French ruling class assigned to them. The Polish workers have had an opportunity, at great expense, to learn the nature of clashing nationalistic ambitions. They are beginning to realize that the workers will benefit in no way by the extension of the nations boundary lines. And the Silesian workers have by this time learned that regardless of whether the Polish or German flag waves over Silesia they will be just as much exploited.

For the workers there is but one solution, the destruction of capitalism the world over and the establishment of workers and peasants Soviets.

"EQUALITY" BEFORE THE LAW.

The law has ever been as useful an instrument in the service of the ruling class as the armed forces. In many respects it is much more serviceable than an army for it enables the ruling class to get all that it wants with the seeming consent of the people, through their representatives. The master class has never failed to utilize the law to the utmost.