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By Max Shachtman

COOLIDGE AND PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE

THE recent declaration of Governor-General Leonard Wood again denying the rumor that he intended to resign as American administrator of the Philippine Islands, followed by a newspaper interview with President Coolidge in which he expressed complete confidence in Wood despite the sharp opposition to him by the Filipinos, have been capped by the opposition to independence for the islands contained in the Coolidge message to the short session of congress. The opinions expressed on the Philippines, while no legislative action based upon them is certain in this session, clearly indicate the trend of American policy and cannot fail to have an effect upon the Filipino independence movement.

It is obviously the Coolidge policy to bind the islands more firmly to the Wall Street hitching post, to force open the still-remaining doors that keep American interests, chiefly rubber, from intensified exploitation of the resources and people of the Philippines. The half-promise of the Jones law for eventual independence, together with the solemn promises of presidents and governor-generals in the past, are more definitely than ever before slated for the discard. The tendency of American imperialism is steadily developing in exactly the opposite direction.

THE Coolidge attitude towards the Philippines, whether acted upon by the short session or by the congress which assembles to install the newly-elected members in March, will add to the factors which are developing the movement for independence towards a more militant position. This movement is now led almost exclusively by petty-bourgeois elements who have the support of practically all of the Filipinos. It has a number of serious weaknesses, chief among which is its native independence upon the "sweet and meaningless phrases and illusive "promises" of the American bourgeoisie and its superabundance of faith in the effectiveness of measures of a strictly legal nature within the limits of American domination. The tenure of political life for such a policy is largely the Jones law, which, seemingly, pledges the U. S. to eventual independence. The virtual dumping of the Jones law, the likelihood of the adoption of the Bacon bill, must result in a radical change in the character of the independence movement. The masses of the Filipino people will undoubtedly bring pressure to bear for the adoption of a program of struggle against American imperialism.

Other factors making for this are:

THE development of a labor movement in the Philippines which supports independence unreservedly. The greater and more conscious participation of proletarian elements in the independence movement will tend to cleanse it of its futile mild-manneredness and drive it towards the left. The movement of a Labor Party in the Filipino trades unions will hasten this process. The classic example of such a development can be found in the Chinese revolutionary movement.

The successful march of the Chinese revolutionary forces against the foreign imperialists. This historic event cannot fail to point a lesson to the Filipinos. In this connection there is the remarkable interview given to American newspapers by General Chiang Kai-Shek in which he expressed, as the opinion of the Chinese revolutionary movement, sympathy and solidarity for the independence movement in the Philippines. After all, Washington is more than 11,000 miles from Manila, while Canton is less than 700 miles off . . .

FINALLY, the American-inspired organization of an anti-independence party by Aguinaldo (if it has not actually been subsidized by American imperialists then they are getting a good thing for nothing!) will force the independence movement into a more definite position.

The flames of the revolutionary anti-imperialist movement are spreading rapidly throughout the Orient. The short space of water intervening between the mainland and the Philippines will not serve to quench these flames.

SIGNS OF A CRISIS IN FRANCE

THE desperate measures taken by Poincare to stabilize the franc have not been without their critical results. Unemployment, which was practically unknown, at worst negligible, for many months, is increasing sharply. In a bare few weeks thousands of workers have been laid off; many establishments can furnish only part-time employment. Factories, particularly automobile plants and allied industries, are either shutting down or severely curtailing their production programs. The slump continues and a heavier one is predicted.

To head off the crisis, a number of firms are paying a sort of unemployment relief to the workers. Legislation which has been pending for two years in

the chamber of deputies, to make such funds and payments obligatory for all establishments, has practically no likelihood of being considered for some time.

Another method of holding off the wolf is utilized by some employers who are firing their foreign-born employes (there are hundreds of thousands of Italian, Polish and other workers in France) so as to prevent the French workers from immediately feeling the effects of the depression and acting accordingly.

The foreign trade of France, especially with Germany and the United States, is not in a bright condition. Figures for the first ten months of 1926 show that France imported from Germany 3,894,000 francs worth of goods as compared to 1,838,000 francs in 1925; exports to Germany on the other hand increased from 1925 to 1926 only by 196,000 francs.



Similarly with the United States. The unfavorable balance of trade amounts to 3,283,000 francs, as against an unfavorable balance, in 1925, of only 2,398,000 francs.

THE foreign affairs of France have not fared much better. Pressure continues to be exerted by the United States for the ratification of the Mellon-Berenger debt accord, failing which no loans will be made to bolster up the sagging frame. British and American capitalism have effectively scotched the Briand-Stresemann plan to float the Dawes railway bonds so as to raise a loan for the rehabilitation of the franc. Pressure is also being brought to shatter the German-French accord whose prospects looked so rosy after the Thoiry negotiations. The Germans, furthermore, are disappointed by the failure to evacuate the Rhine valley, as was projected at Thoiry. The menace of a conflict with Italy continues to hang over France, and feeling has run high especially after the exposures in connection with Ricciotti Garibaldi.

Unrest continues in the French colonies. With the Chinese revolution as a source of inspiration, and their own sufferings as a goal, the Annamite revolutionary movement in French Indo-China is pressing forward for liberation. In Syria, France has made such a thorough mess of its rule by mandate that it is seriously considering the suggestion to yield the mandate to another power. But here there are complications. Syria is coveted by Italy for its imperialist ambitions in the Near East, and by Germany as the first step in the creation of a new colonial base. Unfortunately for all of these, Syria is not like Abyssinia which was so calmly divided by the two robbers, Britain and Italy. It has a strong revolutionary independence movement, whose scars are not very honorably borne by France.

Altogether France is not in any too enviable a position. If Poincare would take the trouble to look across the English Channel he would see an image of the disintegration that already marks the future of French imperialism.

FASCISM ON A VOLCANO

THE new series of repressive laws instituted by Mussolini is a manifestation of the growing insecurity of fascist rule in Italy. If one can speak of an impending crisis in France, this is many times more true of Italy.

Mussolini has been unable, even with the help of his financial "wizard," Count Volpi, to secure a favorable balance of trade for Italy. In 1925 there was a passive balance of trade to the extent of 7,887,000,000 lire; and for the first six months of 1926 there was already an excess of imports over exports of more than 6,000,000,000 lire. As an indication that this situation was being "remedied," Volpi announced, at the end of last July, a surplus of receipts amounting to 1,500,000,000 lire. But not only was this surplus secured by the raising of tariff

duties putting them on a gold basis while the lire was steadily falling, but it involved Italy in a new contradiction.

Italy, altho predominantly an agricultural country, is unusually densely populated, and depends not only for its coal and other minerals, but for some of the most elementary food products, upon importation. To solve its budget crisis it increases its tariff duties. But the increase in tariff duties affects the price of its food imports, of such living necessities as cereals, meats, etc. The resultant suffering for the workers can easily be imagined.

The cost of living not only rises, but the wages of the Italian workers, which have for some time been practically the lowest in Europe, continue to sink. Exploitation is intensified. Mussolini's recent law, instituting the nine-hour working day, did not contain a proviso for payment for the extra hour of labor. Only the frightful and repressive consequences prevent the occurrence of hundreds of strikes; even then, some have taken place. The lire continues to hover around a very low point.

THERE is a limit to the state of quiescence that can be maintained even at the point of a fascist bayonet. With the bitter years of Mussolini's rule in mind, the masses of the workers are reaching the point of desperation and revolt. The shakiness of Mussolini's position is indicated everywhere. Attempts to assassinate chiefs of government are often a barometer of unrest; four attempts have been made on Mussolini's life in the period of a year.

In the ranks of his own party there is a powerful movement of division and discord. Repeated fractional struggles among the fascisti are not the smallest of Mussolini's worries. The dissidents have reached such a point of power and effect that Mussolini was forced to withdraw his previous autocratic decrees and permit a certain amount of democracy and electoral rights within the fascist party. The fiction of Mussolini's universal popularity has been additionally demolished by the persistent reports of demonstrations—isolated and spontaneous, but demonstrations nevertheless—of members of the fascist party bearing placards upon which Mussolini is denounced. These are not to put it very conservatively, signs of stability.

Like France, Italy is not faring so well in the field of foreign affairs. Her alliance with England is neither firm nor eternal. Britannia has never been distinguished for her loyalty to the allies of the moment before if the allies of the moment later offered better opportunities. There is no doubt but that in the negotiations which are being conducted between Briand and Chamberlain, France will propose as a condition for forsaking her rapprochement towards Germany—upon which England looks with alarm—the withdrawal of British support from Italy's imperialist ambitions—which is not looked upon with any too much happiness by France. The uncovering of the Garibaldi-Rapolla scandal, and the intrigues of Mussolini's agents to discredit France in Spain in connection with the Catalonian independence movement, have not served to increase fascist stock with the French.

THE blow to Mussolini as a consequence of the overthrow of Pangalos in Greece is too well known to need repetition. The fascist ruler's other adventures in the Balkans have not strengthened his hand, either. It took only the report of the treaty arranged between Italy and Albania to call forth strong denunciation of Mussolini's skirmishes in the Adriatic from a number of the Jugo-Slavian leaders. Raditch and Ninchitch both have intimated their determination to resist Mussolini's encroachments upon Jugo-Slavia's interests by the establishment of an Italian protectorate over Albania.

The Turks, too, do not appear so easy a prize as the lord of the Chighi palace originally presumed. Kemal Pasha has shown an unusual belligerency in defying Italy's attempts at aggression in Asia Minor. When the threat of invasion was imminent, the Ankara leader did not hesitate for a moment to mobilize a number of army corps to meet the fascist troops; but if Kemal did not hesitate, Mussolini did.

It is, of course, impossible to predict the length of Mussolini's rule. But his days are numbered. There is, as we have said above, a limit to suffering, and a limit to the period in which Mussolini can continue to exist without being able to solve the raging contradictions that are undermining fascism. One needs add only that the "official" bourgeois opposition of the Aventine bloc has virtually collapsed. After the fascisti, the Communists are the strongest party in Italy and their hold upon the masses is strong despite all the terrific handicaps with which they are confronted. The Gordian knot of Italy's crisis can be cut only with the sword of revolution in the hands of the Italian proletariat.