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The Shields Daily News.

FRIDAY, June 4th, 1920.

TRADE WITH RUSSIA.

THE visit of M. Krassin to the British Government has been the subject of much debate, not only as to the expediency of conducting any negotiations with the Bolshevik Government's representative, but also as to the morality of such negotiations.

It is difficult to understand how there can be any question as to the wisdom of re-opening trading relations with Russia provided proper precautions are taken to see that we do not get the worst of the bargain and that we receive payment for all we may send her. The economic interdependence of Europe was not quite so fully realised as it ought to have been before the war, but the restoration of peace did not bring back to us the old prodigality of goods to which we were accustomed; we have learned that the world is a delicate economic machine and that we cannot destroy or injure one part of it without feeling the consequences in the other. The balance cannot be restored until those countries which for the moment are "down and out" shall have taken their old place in the economic system.

Before the war a substantial part of the imported cereals of the industrial parts of Europe were drawn from Russia. During the war much of what she previously supplied was drawn from American reserves; but these will not be available always, and unless we find some other source of supply we are likely soon to be faced with the prospect of a great shortage. It has been objected that the Russian peasant is at present producing barely enough for his own consumption, and that we cannot hope to receive any exports of wheat from Russia for some considerable time. It must be admitted that at least one of the reasons why the peasant is not producing more than is necessary for himself is that he sees no means at present of exchanging a surplus for those things which he most requires, and that in her present condition Russia is herself not able to supply them. He has no incentive to produce a surplus of trade on the part of the Allies. He would be able to import any implements he might require, and with a larger market in which to exchange his goods he would be more willing to increase his production.

The question of how the Russian Government is to pay for the goods she may receive has been greatly exercising the minds of those who oppose a resumption of trade. They consider that she cannot pay for them in gold, for all the available gold in Russia would not suffice to meet the debts she has already incurred, and moreover there is a great deal of doubt as to how the gold which the Russian Government has came into its possession and whether it is their lawful property or not. The simplest way out of that difficulty seems to be that the suggestion should be carried out that goods should be paid for by goods. Russia geographically and by nature is suited to supply goods of which we are in need, and, we in return are able to supply goods of which Russia stands in great need. There should be little difficulty in forming some arrangement by which an exchange could be effected without interfering with the vexed question of Bolshevik gold. Such an arrangement would at least leave us free from the taunt that we were selling goods to Lenin as a reward of his plunder.

The fact that in these negotiations we have to deal with Lenin or his representatives—however well they may be camouflaged—does not in any way alter the considerations we have set forth, nor can we see that it lays us open to any imputation of dishonour. It does not follow that because we deal with him as the accredited head of the Russian State we approve of the methods by which he has attained that position. The system of Government which the Russians choose to adopt is a matter for themselves; all we have to ensure is that the men with whom we negotiate, are qualified to speak in the name of the Russian people. Provided that Government does not pursue a policy of aggression towards us or its neighbours, we have no right to interfere. To refuse to trade with Russia simply because she has adopted a form of Communism is tantamount to declaring that we are entitled to tell any other nation in the world how it must govern itself.

In discussing the question of the resumption of trade with Russia, one other aspect should not be lost sight of. In the early days of the Bolshevik regime, it was greatly feared that in Russia a fire had been lighted which would speedily spread to all other civilised countries and that Lenin himself was only too eager to assist the conflagration. So long as Russia is isolated and her population poor and discontented, that danger is little to be feared; but so soon as her population settles down to the normal activities of peace and begins once again to enjoy the necessities of life, she will become more contented and less likely to be dangerously aggressive. One of the surest ways of bringing that about is to resume economic relations between her and other countries. Such resumption cannot fail to react favourably on Russia herself and on the rest of Europe.

RAILWAY STOCKHOLDERS.

A meeting was held in the Sanctuary, Westminster, London, yesterday afternoon, of the Central Council of Railway Stockholders' Associations. Mr. Ernest Bevin presided. Delegates from Warlish, Scottish, and Irish Stockholders' Associations. Mr W. F. Bauer, chairman of the Scottish Association, presided. The meeting was private, but a statement was issued subsequently to the effect that the meeting received a report from Prime Minister regarding negotiations with a view to placing before him the views of the owners of the railways with regard to the present position.

Summary of the News.

Another step towards the opening of negotiations with the Russian Soviet Government has been made. The Supreme Economic Council has now received from the Soviet representatives their report on the possibilities of re-opening of trade between the Allied countries and Russia. The Supreme Economic Council are now considering this information, and the next move will depend on the view taken by the Council. In a semi-official statement issued last night it was emphasised that the negotiations are not confined to Co-operative societies. The Allies at San Remo were unanimous in their desire to resume trading with Russia.

The Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, yesterday, was questioned with regard to the Krassin negotiations, and replied that if the Soviet Government opened British prisoners must be released, and there must be no Russian tampering with British interests in the East. The French and Italian representatives were present in London. With regard to French Press criticisms of the conversations in London, Mr Lloyd George said such efforts to foment trouble should not be taken as proof that French public opinion was perplexed.

The King has subscribed £100, and Queen Alexandra £50, to the Mayor of London's relief fund, which now totals close upon £9,000. The rate of cleaning up the devastated area is still going on, but it becomes increasingly evident that little if anything will be found of Fifty Thousand suspected to house the homeless, to be followed by 400 Nazis.

By a large majority the miners throughout Scotland have decided to give notice to cease work on June 25th unless a further offer is made. The negotiating committee has been appointed to place the position before the Ministry of Mines.

In the House of Commons, yesterday, Mr Chamberlain told Mr Lunn that he "hoped to be in a position to make a statement on the subject of the proposed increase in the war time increases of wealth on Monday.

In the House of Commons, yesterday, Mr Lloyd George, replying to a question as to the negotiations with M. Krassin, the Russian delegate at present in London, intimated that he had a detailed statement of the conditions arrived at by representatives of the Allied Governments as to commercial relations with Soviet Russia. An understanding to release British prisoners, he said, was an indispensable preliminary to such a renewal of trading relation.

Messages from Australia regarding the Prince of Wales make it clear that, while the Australians have a deep affection, the tension of travel and constant public occasions, and this interest will be spent in golfing near Melbourne. At Ballarat on Wednesday the Prince, standing on an open platform in a heavy storm of driving rain, uncovered and bowed to an address of welcome and unveiled a war memorial arch. An enormous crowd gave him a hearty welcome.

The "Times" observes M. Krassin "is acting in the name and under the authority of the Soviet Government." In Russia words like "Prime Minister of the United Kingdom yesterday" have helped to the Prime Minister of Canada, who has met him and his colleagues, Conservative and Liberal, are trafficking with the "assassins." Perhaps Lord Birkenhead, London's fastidiously filled him with a "sense of disgust." The mask is dropped at last.

The "Morning Post" says: The main fact of the extraordinary situation created by the Prime Minister's reception of M. Krassin is that with the approval of the British Government a Bolshevik envoy is to establish his headquarters, equipped with a numerous staff and apparently considerable resources, in the centre of London. That means that the Soviet Government believe to be the great majority of the public, a circumstance which respecting Russia's more lucid moments, they must yet been presented. It is impossible to escape the impression that Mr Lloyd George was have you to learn it would seem to have allowed the Prime Minister of the Crown to come to terms with Russian Bolshevism. It is true that he has dissociated the Crown with his customary eloquence of invective, but Mr Lloyd George is never so likely to be misleading as when he is most in a hurry. Britain will find it a very costly thing to attempt to be neutral between the Bolshevik regime, it was greatly feared that in Russia a fire had been lighted which would speedily spread to all other civilised countries and that Lenin himself was only too eager to assist the conflagration. So long as Russia is isolated and her population poor and discontented, that danger is little to be feared; but so soon as her population settles down to the normal activities of peace and begins once again to enjoy the necessities of life, she will become more contented and less likely to be dangerously aggressive. One of the surest ways of bringing that about is to resume economic relations between her and other countries. Such resumption cannot fail to react favourably on Russia herself and on the rest of Europe.

TRADE WITH RUSSIA

Authorised by the Supreme Council Months Ago.

PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINS.

The Prime Minister answered several questions in Parliament yesterday relating to Russian affairs.

Asked by Commander Viscount Curzon if a state of war existed as the result of trade between Britain and Soviet Russia, The Prime Minister said the answer was in the negative.

Answering a further question, the Premier said it was an indisputable proposition that our prisoners in Russia should be released before negotiations were opened with the Soviet Government. (Hear, hear.)

Col. Archer-Shee: Is it not desirable that our officers and men should be sent over the Russian frontier before we open up any negotiations with these ruffians, and have our prisoners released?

No answer was given.

Supreme Council's Decision to Permit Trade With Russia.

In reply to Col. Gretton, the Prime Minister said the decision to permit trade with Russia was arrived at at a meeting of the Supreme Council in Paris on January 16th, reaffirmed at a further meeting in London on February 26th, and at San Remo on April 19th. The Supreme Council decided to authorise representatives of the Allied Governments to meet M Krassin and the Russian trade delegation then in Copenhagen with a view to restarting trade relations with Russia through the medium of the co-operative societies. At the same time, it was further decided that the Allied representatives should finally discuss the terms with the Russian delegates the best methods of removing obstacles and difficulties which would be encountered in trade relations in the general interests of Europe. At the same time, the question of the Russian debtors was considered, and it was decided that the Allied representatives should meet M. Krassin and the Russian delegates, except M. Litvinoff, in London, and the representatives of M. Krassin was head of the delegation and represented