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EDITORIAL

Missionaries as Bales of Merchandise.

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No doubt that the German raid upon China in “vindication of Chinese outrages upon German missionaries” is intended to furnish material upon which to base capitalist stump speeches during the approaching elections for the Reichstag. We shall hear much about “patriotism,” “religion,” and the like; and who knows but that outside of Germany similar arguments will be made on the same subject, and with the same end in view.

These speeches may edify those who find it profitable to be edified thereby, to the increasing number of clear-headed people the circumstance serves to throw light upon the development of capitalist political methods.

At one time the bale of merchandise was the pretext for “patriotic” outbursts. Our own continent, especially below the Rio Grande, was the theater of such “patriotic” displays. An English, a French, a German or a Spanish adventurer would suddenly turn up and open a shop in some town of Latin America. His appearance was usually connected with some scheme concocted in the Foreign Office of his own country. Sooner or later a revolution would break out in the town he settled down in. Thereupon, whosoever’s shop remained intact, his own was always consumed by fire. Like the bankrupt bourgeois who in the days of the downfall of the Commune in Paris poured petroleum over their places, burned them down, and then laid the blame upon the Communists, and got their insurance moneys, these traders always destroyed their own property, and forthwith demanded indemnity from the country of their “adoption.” These indemnities were not small. Bales of cheap merchandise, not worth \$10, are known to have become the basis for claims running up into hundreds of thousands of dollars, and for armed interventions that subjected the American State, picked out for the purpose, to the pillage of the soldiery of the European nation whose “citizen” had been outraged. To a not inconsiderable extent, the history of many a Latin American State is the history of these “patriotic” efforts of the capitalists of some European nation, at the time running its government, to “maintain the dignity of their country.” the Maximilian Empire in Mexico, backed by French arms, was the most notable instance of these European capitalist conspiracies.

Of late the pretexts for these raids by European states have undergone a change; it must be admitted, an improvement—from their standpoint. Missionaries are now substituted for bales of merchandise. The bale of merchandise can not be claimed to have a religion; “sacred” though property may be to the capitalist, he can exploit “religion” twice as well. Moreover, as human life is becoming such a drug on the market through the development of improved machinery, the Missionary can be had cheaply; his whole outfit—stove-pipe hat, white cravat, umbrella and smirk—need not cost half as much as the average bale of “cheap and bad” merchandise. Thus it happens that with increased and increasing frequency we now find “patriotism” to bubble, and rage, and find expression in the clatter of arms, not over bales of merchandise, as used to be the case in the days of less developed capitalism, but over the carcass of a Missionary, whose life, useless, superfluous, and a drug at home, blossoms abroad into an odorous martyr, the source of “religious” and “patriotic” indignation that serves as an infinitely better wedge to open new markets with, and replenish the coffers of the Gentile, Jewish and Atheist labor-fleecers at home. So now with the German episode in China.

This development in its outward manifestation is instructive. How will it work at home? We shall soon be able to tell.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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