

The British Dominions Against Locarno

By JOHN PEPPER.

THE outstanding success of British imperialism's foreign policy during the past year was Locarno. Through Locarno Great Britain has succeeded, first in forcing Germany into the anti-Soviet bloc, secondly in breaking up the continental hegemony of France, thirdly in bringing into being a European bloc against the evermore predominating American imperialism.

Chamberlain, the British minister for foreign affairs, was hailed as a hero in Great Britain for the Locarno success. As the most successful agent of British imperialism he was showered with the highest decorations and distinction. Yet hardly a few weeks pass before there already develops the first rift in this so artificial structure of Locarno. The extremely important news is now reported from London that the British dominions are expressing their opposition to Locarno.

Dominion policy is the Achilles' heel, the most vulnerable point in the whole foreign policy of the British empire. The British government and the British parliament conduct foreign policies but all diplomatic steps of the British ruling class are likewise binding upon the dominions, upon the population of Canada, Australia, Ireland, South Africa, and India. At least this was the case before the war and also during the war. But in the post-war years there began slowly, and in recent years ever more rapidly, the crystallization of an entirely new attitude on the part of the British dominions. They are no longer content to remain vassals of the British bourgeoisie in their foreign policy. Several causes have contributed in bringing about this new policy. First: during the war the dominions had to make very large sacrifices in men and money for British imperialism. For this reason they are wary of new war-like entanglements. Secondly, a new big industry was cultivated during the war in all important dominions which extraordinarily stiffened the backbone of the native bourgeoisie, they demanded an independent tariff and diplomatic policy. Third: the mighty American imperialism has broken the finance monopoly of British imperialism and more and more becomes the principal source of credit

for the British dominions, thereby exercising, like the magnetic mountain of folk-lore, an irresistible attraction upon the dominions.

Already in the beginning of 1925, at the first important step of British foreign policy, the adoption of the Ghent Protocol, the dominions declined to co-operate. The British government wanted to call a general imperial conference but the dominion governments declined the invitation because they feared that some sort of obligation bound up with new wars might result for them as the result of the conference. The chief organ of the British empire, The Times, at that time wrote a whole series of articles on this gravest danger to the British empire. It said: "Britain's most important problem in the post-war period is the question of how the six autonomous sections of Great Britain, which in their entirety constitute the real imperial power, can be drawn together into a uniform policy against the dangers menacing the empire. We are confronted here with a problem of most extreme significance because it involves the very existence of the empire. If these six units of the British empire cannot come to an understanding as to foreign policy then their transformation into mutually independent states becomes inevitably a question of the times. They cannot solve this question in any other way than to answer: either we must recognize the need for a uniform foreign policy or else the empire must fall to pieces." (Retranslated from the German).

The Times is right. The question really is that either the British bourgeoisie be successful in conducting a uniform world policy for the empire or else the British empire falls to pieces. The events of foreign policy show evermore clearly however that the dominions no longer tolerate the British "uniform" world policy, or in other words the imperialist policy which is contrary also to their interests. The British government intends to call an imperial conference of all dominions next June. But this imperial conference can help very little, it will not create the unity of the British empire but will bring to even more crass expression the existing antagonisms.