

# From Cover to Cover

By MAX SHACHTMAN

Some years ago, when I was still imbibing from the mossy fountain of High School knowledge, it was suddenly announced that the United States had declared war on Germany, and joined the Allied forces. And from that day, I was plied with propaganda, in the form of official documents, teachers' admonitions and auditorium speeches, to the effect that the German Kaiser had wickedly and wantonly begun the war, had prepared for it for the last 40 years, and was seeking to spread the hegemony of Deutsche Kultur all over the world. This impression received its final confirmation at every picture show, which invariably showed a mustached, withered-armed beast, directing a goose-stepping army into France and Belgium; there, flaxen-haired peasant beauties in charming laced, velvet corselets, spent their time in struggling against the repulsive hugs of monocled Hun lieutenants, while their soldiers amused themselves by playing lawn tennis with their bayonets, using babies for serving. I was indignant, outraged.

But since that time I have learned a thing or two. I have been completely disillusioned about every aspect of the late holocaust. In short, I have become "a Red."

Mr. Francis Neilson's latest book, "Duty to Civilization" (Huebsch), does not help in my disillusionment but it does add to my information. Like all liberals, he is sincere, indignant, indefatigable in his research, as far as he goes—but he does not go far enough. He helps to lay low the already well-pierced legend of German guilt, and he reveals with well-authenticated documents that there has not yet been such a record of chicanery, lying, document falsification, hypocrisy and generally revolting deceit as that which characterized the World War. There are, for instance, few who have heard of the trial of the Russian War Minister, Sukhomlinov; of the Kautsky, Gooss, de Siebert revelations; of the Livre Noir (to be reviewed later); and of the other documents made public in the last few years. (Prof. Sidney B. Fay has made an excellent summary of them in his "New Light on the Origins of the War.")

Mr. Neilson's statement that secret diplomacy is a most important cause of war is, however, superficial, just as much as it would be to say that the wearing of vague, loose clothing by a pregnant woman is the cause of childbirth. The causes of war, which is inherent, inevitable and periodically recurrent in the social system under which we live, are independent of any such phenomena as "secret diplomacy."

The same may be said of Mr. Francis Delaisi's "Oil: Its Influence on Politics" (Lab. Pub. Co., England). The book, like Mr. Neilson's, is valuable for the information it gives on the part oil has played in the development of the diplomatic and political relationships of the United States, England, France, Germany and Russia. Altho many new divisions and alliances have been made since the book was written (1920) it contains a very good resume of the swift course of events which have brought oil to the forefront, and caused the international divisions of Standard Oil versus Royal Dutch Shell. But the struggle for oil as the sole cause of future (or past) wars, is an absurdity. Were oil to become as free and plentiful as water, wars would happen just the same. That the oily scramble is a hastener of war, is, however, quite another thing.